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Pot has been known to affect decision-making: Province does 360 in 24 hours metronews

ISTOCK

'The right to be safe'

HATE-MOTIVATED ATTACKS

Muslim women teach, learn self-defence

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Self-defence classes for Muslim women by Muslim women are in high demand, following a rash of Islamophobic attacks in Toronto.

The new classes were organized by Shameela Zaman and Anoodth Naushan. The pair works with Outburst!, a program for young Muslim women in Toronto run through the Barbra Schlifer Clinic.

After a woman wearing a hijab was attacked in Toronto on Nov. 16, Zaman and Naushan asked the Muslim community what they needed. The answer they heard was, "Self-defence."

"It's really troubled, concerning and bothersome that young Muslim women are feeling really unsafe everywhere," Naushan said. "Everyone, including young Muslim women, we all have the right to be safe," Naushan said.

Hate crimes against Muslims have been on the rise in recent years, and tend to spike after high-profile incidents like the terrorist attacks in Paris or last year's shooting on Parliament Hill. According to Statistics Canada, hate crimes targeting Muslims increased 30 per cent between 2012 and 2013.

StatsCan also noted Muslim women are more likely to be victims of hate crime than female members of other minority groups.

The first self-defence class was Thursday at the University of Toronto, and three more have been planned so far. There have been requests to have classes everywhere from Rexdale to Scarborough, and a Muslim Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instructor in Calgary has also started offering defence training for women in her city.

"It's young Muslim women teaching other young Muslim women, and that's good," said Zaman. "We're equipping these women with these skills but we're also not blaming them for the violence that happens to them."

Classes are tailored to individual students' needs, Naushan said. Participants can tell the instructors what their goals are and adjust their training based on their own experience with violence.

Shameela Zaman and Anoodth Naushan. CONTRIBUTED

WHAT DOES PROGRESS LOOK LIKE?

When it comes to getting the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area moving, the solutions are as diverse as the communities that make up the region. That's why Metrolinx is working to find the right answer for every community–as part of our vision for the entire region. And Light Rail Transit (LRT) is an important part of this vision.

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Finch West LRT

Work is underway on this 11-km light rail transit line that will run along the surface of Finch Avenue, creating new connections between the new Finch West subway station and Humber College.

Hurontario Main LRT

Metrolinx is working with the cities of Mississauga and Brampton to bring 23 kilometres of rapid transit to these rapidly growing communities. The line is proposed to have 26 stops, to move twice as many people 60% faster than bus service today.

Hamilton LRT

With construction to start in 2019, Hamilton residents can look forward to new connections between McMaster University and Queenston Circle. The line will also link directly to the new West Harbour GO Station.

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Nunavut woman accuses U.K. fashion label of appropriating an Inuit design. **Canada**

METRO EXPLAINS

That sinking feeling in the street

A central section of the city's longest street is expected to remain closed for another two weeks as crews work to repair it, city staff tells Metro. Yonge Street has been closed at College Street since a sinkhole formed on Nov. 20. The road is expected to reopen Dec. 11. Mason Ghafghazi, a geotechnical engineer and assistant engineering professor at the University of Toronto, answered Metro's questions.

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

1 What's a sinkhole?

Sinkholes occur when a cavity, or void, forms underground and then the surface on top of that cavity — which in this case is the pavement of Yonge Street, pictured right — collapses into the hole. Some sinkholes can be large enough to swallow blocks, but this one is 15 metres long and 0.3 metres deep.

In downtown Toronto, those cavities are usually formed when underground water washes away the soil under the road.

2 What could have caused this sinkhole?

When investigating the cause of a sinkhole, water leaking out of a broken water main or broken sewage lines are "smoking guns," he said.

But the city has ruled out both of those causes, "So, the detective work becomes a little bit more complicated," said Ghafghazi.

In an older city like Toronto, a historical watermain break could have caused the cavity in the first place and a recent stress could have caused it to collapse years later, he said.

LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Nearby construction can cause a sinkhole, he said. A collapse in an excavation or construction process that pumps water and mud into the ground can lead to sinkholes, he said.

3 Was it caused by the nearby construction site?

Ghafghazi can't possibly say. While bad construction can cause sinkholes, a sinkhole near a construction site doesn't mean the construction site caused the sinkhole, he said.

And sometimes, construction nearby can be the catalyst to a sinkhole, when the cavity in the ground is already there.

"It's like a Jenga tower; something that gives it a nudge can cause a sinkhole. It could be a truck, it could be construction, it's that last unlucky person who loses Jenga," he said.

Ghafghazi also can't say if the sinkhole is connected to an incident that occurred in the same place last March, when contained water rushed into the subway tunnel and caused a subway shutdown.

The source of that water hasn't been determined, according to the TTC.

4 What to do about it?

One sinkhole can mean there are other potential, uncollapsed sinkholes nearby, so the first step is to determine the cause of the sinkhole, and see if it's likely to mean there could be more, said Ghafghazi.

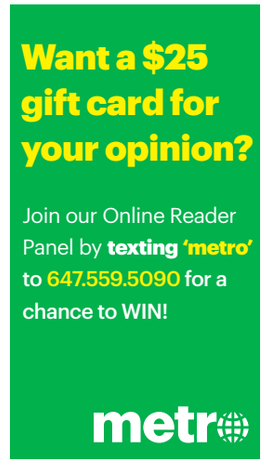
Without knowing what caused it, city staff have excavated all of Yonge Street from College Street to Grenville Street to confirm there are no further voids in the ground that could cause more sinkholes. Work is now underway to repair the road.

5 What about those really large sinkholes?

Toronto has had sinkholes large enough to swallow cars, but the giant apartment-building swallowing kind haven't happened here.

The world's largest sinkholes are usually chemically caused in areas where ground is made up of material that can be dissolved by an acid, such as acid rain, but those conditions don't exist in Toronto, he said.

> **"It's like a Jenga tower; something that gives it a nudge can cause a sinkhole.**
> Mason Ghafghazi



Changing course on pot

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Restaurant industry happy with province's policy u-turn

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Many in Toronto's restaurant industry are exhaling a sigh of relief after the province announced plans to revisit its stance on public medical marijuana use.

Associate Health Minister Dipika Damerla said Wednesday medical marijuana users would be free to light up or vaporize in areas where smoking is prohibited, ranging from offices to restaurants and parks. However, 24 hours later, the province reversed course.

"We've heard about the concerns around this regulation and we're going to take this feedback and see if this regulation is the best way to move forward," Damerla said Thursday.

The minister said the province will take a "hard look" at the policy and promised further consultation with stakeholders.

"We're happy the government made this decision, it's what should have been done in the first place," said James Riett, Ontario's vice-president for Restaurants Canada.

Restaurants Canada was surprised by the initial announcement on Wednesday by Ontario's government that would have let medical pot users smoke in public spaces.

> **How do you get staff to ask someone not to take their medicine?**
> Dipika Damerla

The industry association represents 30,000 restaurants across the country, most of them in Ontario. Riett said the government's Wednesday announcement came as a surprise.

In the announcement, Damerla said employers would be allowed to prohibit marijuana smoking on their premises, but Riett said that just creates other problems.

"Our biggest concern is around staffing. How do you get staff to ... ask someone not to take their medicine?" he said. "If you don't allow it and staff are forced to explain, that could upset someone and lead to possible complaints."

Toronto labour lawyer Howard Levitt said any workplace — whether a restaurant or an office — that allows people to use medical marijuana on-site could open themselves up to legal challenges from other employees concerned about exposure to second-hand smoke.

Ontario banned smoking in public places and workplaces in 2006, and Riett called the originally proposed marijuana law "backtracking."

"One of the reasons we were OK with the government moving to ban vaping was that we didn't want to reopen the conversation about smoking. It was a difficult situation and our members had to change how they do business, but it's done with and they've adjusted," he said.

WITH FILES FROM TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

FATAL CRASH

Grieving parents set up tree at cemetery

A grieving mother whose three children and father died in an alleged drunk-driving crash north of Toronto says she and her husband can't bear to have a Christmas tree at home because it reminds them of their loss.

Jennifer Neville-Lake says they set up a tree at the cemetery instead and picked out ornaments to represent each of their loved ones — a stormtrooper, a Rapunzel figurine, Superman and a character from the movie Frozen.

She says friends have also added ornaments.

Nine-year-old Daniel, Harrison, 5, and two-year-old Milly Neville-Lake were killed along with Gary Neville, 65, after the van they were in was T-boned by an SUV in Vaughan, Ont., on Sept. 27.

Marco Muzzo, 29, has been charged with a dozen counts of impaired driving and six more charges of dangerous operation of a motor vehicle related to the incident.

He appeared in court by video link Thursday and his bail hearing has been rescheduled for Dec. 10. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Yatim was 'in to fight till the end,' insists Forcillo

STREETCAR SHOOTING

Officer says he regrets firing a second volley at teenager

If he had to do it over, with only the information he had at the time, Const. James Forcillo wouldn't change anything he did the night he shot Sammy Yatim on a Dundas streetcar, he testified Thursday.

"Knowing what I know now," he said, "I would have never taken the second volley."

For the first time on Thursday, on the stand at his trial for second-degree murder and attempted murder, Forcillo, 32, testified about what he saw and thought in the moments before and after he shot Yatim eight times on July 27, 2013.

In response to a question from his lawyer Peter Brauti about why he believed Yatim, 18, to be an imminent threat to his life Forcillo said that the teen looked like he would fight "to the end."

"In my mind ... he's coming off that streetcar to attack me," Forcillo said, adding that he never believed the teen was surrendering. "Mr. Yatim was in it to fight till the end."

Forcillo explained that he believed his gun was his best option because hand-to-hand combat would have been too dangerous, using his baton would have brought him too close to Yatim and pepper spray would have been ineffective.

Forcillo yelled "drop the knife" repeatedly, but Yatim didn't comply, court heard.

> **In my mind, he's coming off the streetcar to attack.**
> Const. James Forcillo

After the first volley of shots, Yatim was seen lying on his back on the floor of the streetcar in video show to the jury. Forcillo testified he saw the knife was a few inches away from Yatim's right hand. But then, he said, Yatim scooped the knife back up. Forcillo testified that he mistakenly perceived Yatim sitting up — the videos of the streetcar interior show Yatim does not sit up.

Also on Thursday, the jury were shown a video of Forcillo dealing with two men armed with knives in an earlier Kensington Market arrest. Forcillo had told them to drop their knives, lie down and spread their arms with "loud, authoritative commands," he testified. When another officer arrived, the men were handcuffed.

Why were no shots fired in that incident, Brauti asked.

"They did exactly what they were told to do," Forcillo said.

The trial continues Friday.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Const. James Forcillo, charged in the death of Sammy Yatim, walks into court Wednesday. MARTA IWANEK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

CRIME

Charges over hit-and-run

A 61-year-old Brampton man has been charged in connection with a deadly hit and run Wednesday morning involving a dump truck.

Peel Regional Police were called to Kennedy Road, just north of Steeles Avenue, around 6:30 a.m. They say that a 21-year-old male pedestrian was crossing Kennedy when a southbound dump truck hit him and dragged him down the road.

Paramedics rushed the pedestrian to hospital with critical injuries. He later died. His name has not yet been released. Police say the driver who struck the pedestrian failed to remain at the scene.

Sultan Singh Bhamber has been charged with one count of failing to remain at the scene of an accident, causing death. He is scheduled to appear in court in Brampton on Dec. 21.

Anyone with information is asked to call Peel Regional Police at (905) 453-2121 ext. 3710 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Survey kickflips to a close

EXTREME SPORTS

City query asks skateboarders how they use local parks

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Toronto's skateboarding survey is rolling to a close, and local skaters are confident the data will show the need for more skate parks across the city.

As recently as 2000, Toronto lacked any real concrete skateboarding parks. However, after a series of grassroots campaigns, the city's tally has reached 19.

"It may seem like a lot, but Toronto's a big city," said Migs Bartula, a co-founder of the Toronto Skateboard Committee. "Some of those parks are pretty small, and others are pre-fab. There's still parts of the city where kids have to take an hour-long bus ride to get to a park."

A skater gets some air at Toronto's Vanderhoof Skatepark. The city is in the midst of surveying local skaters to develop an official skateboarding policy. CONTRIBUTED

Bartula has been skateboarding in Toronto since the 1990s and formed the TSC to work with the city on getting more parks built, especially in areas where there's little to no existing skateboard infrastructure.

> **Skateboarding is a great activity for youth.**
> Migs Bartula

"Skateboarding is a great activity for youth to get involved in," he said. "It's easy to do and has a low barrier to entry. You just need a board and a place to skate.

"So the more parks the city builds, the more people will do it."

Throughout the fall, the city has been surveying skaters on how they use local parks. The survey closes Nov. 30, and the information will be used to develop an official skateboarding policy.

Bartula can't wait to see the results. He believes they'll show demand for skate parks in some of Toronto's outlying areas.

He's also excited by plans to convert a parcel of land beneath the western Gardiner into an urban park.

"The skateboarding community has wanted a park under there for years," he said. "We've been in contact with them and we'll be involved in the consultation to see how we can fit skateboarding into that park," he said.

Ideally, Bartula would like to see skateboard facilities become a de facto part of Toronto's recreation plans. He said other jurisdictions, including Vaughan, have made strides in that direction.

"It's just a part of their parks now," he said. "There will be a basketball court, tennis court and a skate spot."

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Riders to meet TTC planners

For the first time in TTC history, riders will have a chance to meet face-to-face with the people who plan their transit service.

The TTC is holding an open house from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 1 at George Brown College's waterfront campus, 51 Dockside Dr., and issuing an online survey to gauge customer reaction to proposed changes on the 72 Pape and the 172 Cherry St. buses.

The public was asked to weigh in on transit before — during the design of the new streetcars and the closure of Pape station during construction. But this is the first test of what happens when the TTC puts its riders together with the people who plan the routes, service and frequencies.

Transit officials are hoping the people recognize there are limits to public influence, said TTC spokesman Brad Ross.

"When it comes down to specific route changes, we want to make sure we manage people's expectations, because there are costs around service. Everyone's going to want more service," he said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Items that are truly One of a Kind

800 artisans from across North America have officially set up shop at Exhibition's Enercare Centre for this year's Christmas edition of the One of a Kind Show and Sale. It's on now, until December 6. Here are a few of our favourite finds. LIZ BEDDALL METRO

Colourful collage

Kelly Grace of Kelly Grace Art presents a collection of her colourful prints, a combination of collage and acrylic on wood, at Toronto's One of a Kind Show.

Relic rectos

Artist Noelle Hamlyn repurposes the pages, covers and bindings of old books into beautiful works of framed art.

Felt figures

Whimsical felt decorations by Jennifer Stevenson of TriFly Design.

Ornamental ottoman

An ottoman and pillows by upholstery company foutu tissu feature a Toronto landscape.

Savoury, sizzling scent

The Hogtown Peameal candle by Smells like Canada carries the distinct aroma of the sizzling Toronto favourite.

HOLIDAYS

Get prepared to lighten up

Mallory Chate
For Metro | Toronto

Saturday marks the official start of Toronto's holiday celebrations, with one of the city's popular seasonal traditions, the Cavalcade of Lights, happening at Nathan Phillips Square.

While Cavalcade of Lights is one of the biggest, here are some of the other illuminated places in the city to check out Saturday.

1 Spectacle of Lights — Waterfront:
The Waterfront is going all out this year, lighting up everything from the Toronto Music Garden to the tree outside the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel in twinkling lights. They will also be lighting up the ship structure on the Harbourfront Centre bridge.

2 Light Up the Beach — Beaches:
Starting at 7 p.m., residents can walk with Santa in the Beaches neighbourhood beginning at Leauty Avenue, and light up the boardwalk trees as they go. The ceremony is in partnership with Toronto East General Hospital and DeClute Real Estate, and they plan to have a display of 80,000 lights up by the end of the night.

The annual Cavalcade of Lights is returning to Nathan Phillips Square this weekend.
COURTESY CITY OF TORONTO

3 Light Up Riverside — Queen East
The Riverside holiday festival is a night of holiday shopping deals and that includes the lighting ceremony of the neighbourhood tree. The tree lighting event is happening in the Mustard Seed Courtyard from 5-6:30 p.m., with free live music from The Beach Chorale and servings of warm Guinness stew.

4 Holiday Kick Off — Cabbagetown
The Holiday Kick Off is great because it's early in the day, meaning people can catch any of the other light shows. The community comes together and decorates the Cabbagetown Christmas tree from 12 to 2 p.m. near Parliament and Carlton Street. In the spirit of giving, the Holiday Kick Off is asking for donations for Daily Bread food bank. In turn, wagon rides, food, music and pictures with Santa are all available.

5 Cavalcade of Lights — Rosedale
The Rosedale area will light a 15-metre Christmas tree in their own Cavalcade of Lights. The event runs from 2-6 p.m. at Scrivener Square, and after enjoying the lighting of the tree, people can take horse and carriage rides and write letters to Santa with Mrs. Claus.

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80 Orfus Rd.
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Pooches on parade at Ryerson

A stylish selection of canines in couture ruffed it on the runway on Thursday as part of the student-run Strutt with your Mutt fashion show, a collaboration between Ryerson University's School of Fashion and Purina PawsWay. Volunteer models and their furry friends were the stars of the sold-out evening, with both owner and canine donning designs by pet-friendly fashion houses.

LIZ BEDDALL METRO

The guys. TORONTO ZOO

ATTRACTIONS

New cubs just lion around

Fluffy, white, and mildly curious, the Toronto Zoo's four white lion cubs have had another vet check — and yes, they're all guys.

In a new video released by the zoo today, the four cubs sit and watch a camera.

One even decides to nuzzle the lens.

The cubs were born to Makali, the zoo's four-year-old female white lion, on Sept. 26 and Sept 27.

Zoo staff have been watching them around the clock since then, ensuring that they maintain a healthy weight and don't develop any complications.

For now, Makali and her cubs are still being housed in the zoo's maternity ward, which isn't open to the public.

The white lions actually disappeared from the Timbavati region of South Africa in 1994 before being re-introduced to the region in 2003, and are still considered a vulnerable species.

The Toronto Zoo has released images of its four cubs.

The cubs are the first litter to be born on Canadian soil: Makali and Fintan, their father, were among the first three white lions ever brought to Canada back in 2012.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

FUND-RAISING

Kindness carollers spread non-stop yuletide joy

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

If you run across some yuletide carollers at Union Station on Friday morning, give them a break if they're a bit off key — or droopy-eyed.

It's likely just because they've been hard at work on a 26-hour mission to perform kind acts across the city.

Natasha Koifman, president of public-relations firm NKPR, launched the effort with hopes of inspiring others. Twenty-six is her lucky number, so she staged it around the number — starting on Nov. 26 and running into the next day.

"What we're hoping this does is inspire other organizations and people to spread the kindness," she said. "I think that's really important, not just this time of year, but always."

The timeline meant her group was up all night. It started Thursday with the team taking on several fundraisers and the PR firm making matching donations to charity. It also included several random acts of kindness, like coffee and snack deliveries to hospital workers around the city.

The oddest, perhaps, was dubbed #HiddenCashTO. The group hid envelopes of cash around the city; Koifman tweeted clues to their location between 4 and 5 a.m. from her account.

The charities to benefit from the various initiatives include CAMH, Canadian Diabetes Association, Red Door Family Shelter the Fred Victor Centre and the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

They're being joined at Union Station by the Wexford Glee Club, raising money for the student club.

The "kind crew" at NKPR was ready for the mission at hand Thursday morning. CONTRIBUTED

IN BRIEF

UPX goes for BOGO

Can a train service attract traffic with retail tactics?

Union Pearson Express is trying. In a bid to get more people to experience the service that opened in June, UPX is offering a buy-one-get-one-free offer.

Metrolinx, the provincial agency that runs the train, began distributing coupons this month inviting travellers to try the UPX for $27.50 return — the price of a standard one-way fare. The promotion continues until January.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Hells Angels bunker to hit the market

REAL ESTATE

Property sits on 30-by-120-foot lot in Leslieville

For sale by owner: Federal government.

Features: Iconic piece of Toronto history. Ultimate man cave. Needs lots of TLC or a teardown. Stains on floor most likely caused by leaky roof.

Seven years after Ottawa seized the biggest Hells Angels clubhouse in Canada, it is about to put it up for sale.

The two-storey cement-block bunker on Eastern Avenue, between Logan and Carlaw Avenues, is ideal for those looking to shut out the world: It has two sets of steel front doors and windows barricaded with wire.

"It reminded me of a Legion Hall," says Toronto realtor Desmond Brown, one of just a handful of agents who've been through the 2,500-square-foot property recently, trying to come up with a price and a marketing plan for Ottawa's Seized Property Management Directorate.

"I thought it was a fantastic opportunity because it's such a renowned building — people have been driving by it for decades, wondering what it looks like on the inside. I'm one of the few people who isn't biker, who had a chance to see it."

In March 2007, Ottawa used its new proceeds from crime legislation to legally take over the property. Three weeks later, police raided and seized the property, charging five Hells Angels members with drug and weapons offences.

Brown said the clubhouse is worth about $700,000. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The legendary **Hells Angels clubhouse** on Eastern Avenue is coming up for sale. CARLOS OSORIO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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METROLINX

TRANSIT

Union Pearson Express offers deal

Can a train service attract more traffic by using retail tactics?

The Union Pearson Express (UPX) is trying. In a bid to get more people to experience the service that opened in June, UPX is offering a buy-one-get-one-free offer.

Metrolinx, the provincial agency that runs the train, began distributing coupons this month inviting travellers to try the UPX for $27.50 return — the price of a standard one-way fare.

For now the deal is good until the end of January and doesn't apply to any discounted or Presto fares.

The buy-one-get-one-free coupons are available at UPX stations in Union Station and the airport and online. But you must purchase the ticket in person to get the free return ride.

The marketing idea comes from top executives at the Heathrow Express in London and Stockholm's Arlanda Express.

It does not reflect concerns about the UPX ridership to date, said Metrolinx spokeswoman Anne Marie Aikins.

"Three-year ramp-up times are a common assumption in transportation planning and consistent with other air rail links around the world," she said.

The most recent numbers showed about 2,500 people a day are riding the train, which takes 25 minutes to run between Union Station and Pearson airport. But new numbers will be part of a full report being released next week, said Aikins.

"Air rail links such as London's and Stockholm's launched special discounts to encourage people to give their new service a try. Many kept up the offers throughout the year even once their ridership base was well developed," she said.

The Heathrow Express offers continual discounts on the $43 base fare and the Arlanda Express invites riders to bring a buddy by offering two tickets for $45 instead of the standard $42 one-way fare.

Metrolinx says travellers can expect to see more UPX promotions and marketing strategies in the near future.

Its research shows that travellers typically have entrenched habits when it comes to how they get back and forth to the airport.

A September survey of 1,009 North American air travellers, who had flown in or out of an international airport in the last year, showed 70 per cent tend to stick with the transportation option that has worked for them before. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

5,000

Metrolinx is targeting 5,000 UPX riders a day by the end of its first year in June.

IN BRIEF

Pair sought after reported suspicious behaviour

The RCMP says there's no imminent threat to national security but they would like to know more about two men who were reportedly acting suspiciously near the Rogers Centre on Aug. 31.

Supt. Lise Crouch declined to tell a news conference on Thursday in Milton exactly what was considered suspicious about their behaviour on the John St. bridge.

Crouch called them "persons of interest" and not suspects. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

We've shaved $1B from deficit: Sousa

Ontario is bleeding $1 billion less in red ink than the government had forecast, Finance Minister Charles Sousa has revealed.

Sousa announced Thursday the provincial deficit for this year is $7.5 billion, below the previous $8.5 billion the Liberals had estimated last spring.

In tabling the fall economic statement, the treasurer said next year's shortfall will be $4.5 billion before the books are finally back in the black.

"That marks an improvement of $1 billion in 2015-16 and $300 million in 2016-17," Sousa told the legislature.

"Our government is committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18," he said.

The improved fiscal picture is due mostly to proceeds from the sale of the first 15 per cent of Hydro One, the provincial transmission utility.

Premier Kathleen Wynne eventually plans to sell off up to 60 per cent of the company that controls Ontario's electricity grid. The windfall is supposed to help bankroll the province's $31.5 billion in new transit and transportation construction over the next 10 years.

$7.5B

Amount projected to be Ontario's deficit for 2015-16

But Progressive Conservative MPP Vic Fedeli (Nipissing) warned the money will actually just go toward general revenues for the cash-strapped government.

"The proceeds from the sale of Hydro One are not to fund transit. They're 'to reimburse' the government for money that was already budgeted," Fedeli told the legislature Thursday.

"This has been a transit sham all along," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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WIND

$100 credit offer starts at 5:00pm (local time) on November 26th, 2015 and ends at 1:00pm (local time) on November 27th, 2015. $50 credit offer starts at 1:00pm and ends at 11:59pm (local time) on November 30th, 2015. Get up to $100 or $50 in service credits when you activate on the Smartphone 40 plan or higher. The $100 will be issued in monthly increments of $5 for 10 months. The $50 will be issued in monthly increments of $5 for 5 months. Credits will start to be issued on customers 2nd billing cycle date. All services subject to WIND's Terms of Service, Fair Usage Policy and Internet Traffic Management Policy and are for personal use by an individual. Black Friday phone sale ends November 30th. WINDtab terms and conditions apply. Applicable taxes extra. Learn more at windmobile.ca. Google, Nexus and Android are trademarks of Google Inc. LG and the LG logos are registered trademarks of LG Corp. and its affiliates. Samsung, and Samsung Galaxy Note 5 are trademarks of Samsung Electronics Canada, Inc. and/or its related entities used with permission. Screen images simulated. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. WIND, WIND MOBILE and WINDTAB are trademarks of Wind Telecomunicazioni S.p.A.and are used under licence in Canada by WIND Mobile Corp. © 2015 WIND Mobile

Brandy Laurier and Stephan Hall are at Ronald McDonald House in between visiting their premature baby boy named Bronx. Stephan, was born premature himself and is blind in his right eye as a result. CHRIS SO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Baby needs a miracle

HEALTH

Preemie Bronx struggling in incubator at Mount Sinai

Peeking out from beneath the cuff of Brandy Laurier's blouse is a tiny blue footprint tattoo — a reminder of the day her luck took a turn for the worse.

When she got the marking, she had just lost her first baby, born at 21 weeks. Over the next four years, she would lose both her parents to cancer and deal with the death of another child born early, too.

And things still aren't looking better. For the past three weeks, she and her boyfriend, Stephan Hall, have huddled around an incubator at Mount Sinai Hospital, home to their almost skeletal son, Bronx.

"We need a Christmas miracle," she said, because Bronx, born almost three months early, might not make it. And if he does, doctors are speculating he could have cerebral palsy.

"Every day is an emotional roller-coaster. We are both having a hard time with it. We can't afford to be weak," she said, her voice cracking with emotion.

To make matters worse, Hall's dad was just admitted to an Oshawa hospital, and with Bronx battling with every breath, it looks like Laurier, 38, and Hall, 32, will be spending the holidays at Mount Sinai.

It's a scenario Laurier never expected to face when she entered the 24th week of her third pregnancy — a point at which she says doctors are able to do more for premature babies. It was a milestone she had never reached before.

But at 3:30 a.m. about two weeks later, her water broke as she slept. Doctors were able to delay her labour by a few days, but once she started having contractions, the baby arrived within a half-hour.

The moment he was squeezed out "felt like forever."

"He wasn't crying or making any noises. Everyone knows they are supposed to cry. He wasn't doing anything," she said.

Then came a faint whine.

"I looked at my boyfriend and said, '(Bronx) is going to be OK,'" Laurier recalled.

It's a message she's counting on coming true, even though Bronx is hooked up to a ventilator and a feeding tube.

There have been complications with the baby's heart rate dropping. He is also fighting necrotizing enterocolitis — an intestinal aliment that damages and kills cells.

"As long as we have our little family, we can keep moving and deal with everything as it comes," Laurier said. "As long as he comes out of the hospital with us, that's all I care about."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"We can't afford to be weak."

Mom Brandy Laurier

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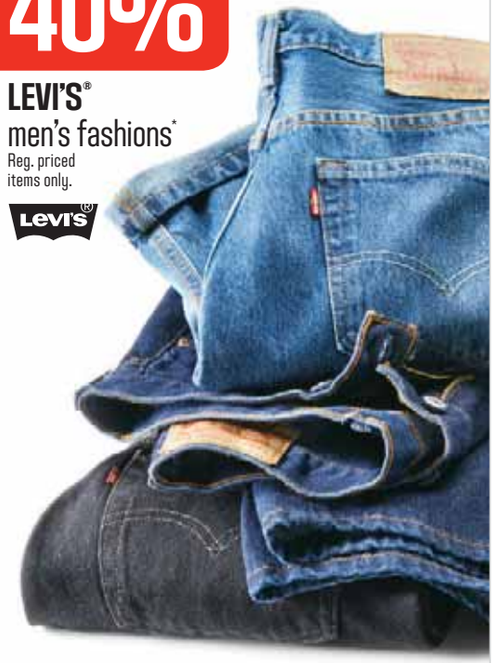

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NE114G415

Canada pulling six jets from combat mission

ISIS

But refueller, surveillance aircraft could remain

Canada will pull six CF-18s from the combat mission against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria but two reconnaissance aircraft and an air-to-air refueller could remain to assist other coalition aircraft in their bombing sorties.

A senior defence department official said Thursday that discussions on the future of Canada's contribution to the multinational campaign against ISIS continue and that no decisions have been made whether to leave other elements of the air task force in the region.

The Liberals have consistently pledged to end the "combat" mission and withdraw the CF-18s but have not ruled out allowing missions by the other aircraft to continue.

Defence expert Dave Perry said the recon and refuelling aircraft play a valuable role appreciated by other nations. In particular, the two CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft, equipped with sophisticated radar and imaging sensors, gather valuable data for ground and air commanders.

"They provide an intelligence picture that supports the coalition writ large," said Perry, a senior analyst with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives are challenging the claim by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that a lack of resources could be driving the decision to wind down the combat role.

Trudeau confirmed earlier this month that the CF-18s would be brought home. He said the Liberal government would instead deploy additional troops to beef up the ongoing training mission. Canada has 69 special operations forces soldiers in northern Iraq training local Kurdish militia to better fight Islamic forces.

But when pressed this week why Canada couldn't continue the combat sorties and beef up the training mission at the same time, Trudeau responded that the country has "limited military investments.

"For six planes we're talking about 600 people to support those planes in various terms," Trudeau told the Global News show The West Block.

"Decisions on sending Canada's military into operational theatres will always be made on a case-by-case basis on what's in our national interest, how best we can play a productive constructive role," Trudeau told journalist Tom Clark.

But Conservative MP James Bezan said Trudeau was "misinformed" on his claim that the 600 personnel were required to support the six fighters alone. In fact, that group supports not only the CF-18s but also reconnaissance aircraft and the air-to-air refueller as well.

Bezan also said there is no truth to Trudeau's claim that an expanded mission would stretch the budget or capabilities of the armed forces.

"There is no reason we can't do both and make it more robust. We have the troops. We increased the budget," said Bezan, who served as former parliamentary secretary to the minister of defence in the previous Conservative government.

As Canada begins winding up its combat operations, Britain is stepping up its military engagement. It unveiled a plan Thursday to begin airstrikes against targets in Syria in addition to the missions in Iraq it has already been flying.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A Royal Canadian Air Force CF-188 Hornet refuels from a CC-150 Polaris over Iraq during Operation IMPACT on Nov. 7, 2015.
OP IMPACT, DND VIA TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

NO PRESSURE

A senior Trudeau adviser briefing reporters said British Prime Minister David Cameron did not pressure Trudeau to reconsider his CF-18 decision when the two prime ministers met in London on Wednesday. In fact, the adviser said, not a single world leader has questioned Canada's pending withdrawal from the air war.

REFUGEE RELIEF

Feds give $100M to UN

The Liberal government's long-awaited $100 million contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help fleeing Syrians is destined for a half-empty international aid bucket.

The UN refugee agency has only raised 45 per cent of the $4.5 billion it sought for 2015 to assist the 4.3 million refugees who have fled Syria for Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, according to its latest statistics.

Canada's contribution, announced Thursday, fulfils a Liberal campaign promise from the federal election, a contribution that includes $10 million for the UN refugee agency to help it select eligible Syrians for settlement in Canada over the next few months.

"Canada is coming out very strongly, not only with this exceptional program of resettling the 25,000 Syrian refugees, but the financial support to UNHCR is absolutely crucial," Furio de Angelis, the UN agency's Ottawa representative, told The Canadian Press.

"Unfortunately our programs are underfunded, and not only UNHCR programs but in general humanitarian programs (are) underfunded."

Government officials in the newly re-named Global Affairs Department acknowledged the vast international funding shortcoming, but said Canada was doing its part because it was still among the top 10 international donors.

International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau said the government will move quickly to disburse the funds that it has already announced, but was noncommittal about whether more might be pledged in the future.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

INTERVIEW

Trudeau issues retort to Tory partisans

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has used an interview with an influential BBC current affairs show in London to issue his most pungent retort yet to his Canadian detractors.

Trudeau, 43, endured more than two years of Conservative party attack ads declaring him "just not ready" before sweeping prime minister Stephen Harper from power in last month's federal election.

Asked by BBC television's NewsNight program about his famous family name, Trudeau didn't deny that having had his father Pierre Trudeau lead the country for almost 16 years opened some doors.

"I think the way I was raised was that I have to work two or three times as hard as anyone else to walk through that door now that it's open," he said.

Trudeau then delivered a sharp retort that could be seen as a direct shot at Harper and other Conservative partisans.

"There's an awful lot of people who sort of shrugged and said he has nothing but a name to go on and found themselves slightly bewildered as I left them in the dust."

Trudeau told the BBC that this year's federal election campaign showed the momentary appeal of divisive policy stances.

"But when you get right down to it, when citizens take a long hard look in the ballot box at actually voting against your neighbours, against someone who's different from you — in pluralistic societies like we have it becomes very difficult to sustain the hatred or the fear of the shopkeeper down the street or your colleague two cubicles over," Trudeau said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Justin Trudeau
THE CANADIAN PRESS

THUNDER BAY

Stats Can reveals murder capital

Keith Hobbs has been fielding a lot of calls this week, which is what happens when you're mayor of a city that's been labelled the murder capital of Canada.

According to Statistics Canada figures released Wednesday, the murder rate in Thunder Bay, Ont. was the highest in the country last year. At 9.04 homicides per 100,000 people, the rate was more than six times the countrywide average of 1.45 per 100,000 people.

In 2014, there were 11 murders in the northwestern Ontario city of 122,000. By comparison, Toronto — a city of 2.8 million — had 83.

According to the city's deputy police chief, the 2014 slayings weren't related. But seven of the 11 murder victims were Aboriginal. That coincides with a nationwide pattern in which Aboriginals are drastically overrepresented among both the victims and accused in homicide cases.

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Clothier accused of appropriation

FASHION

Design stolen off shaman's parka: Woman from Nunavut

Salome Awa says she was furious to discover that a U.K. fashion label had unveiled a sweatshirt with a design that looks nearly identical to one created by her great-grandfather.

But more than anger, the Nunavut woman said she felt shocked that her ancestor's unique design had been taken without permission.

"I went through all the garments and there it was: my great-grandfather's garment, designed exactly the same way as he envisioned," Awa, a CBC Nunavut morning show producer, told the Star in a telephone interview on Thursday morning.

"I was shocked, actually, because it's sacred."

Her great-grandfather was a shaman, Awa explained. He had asked his wife to make a unique parka with hands on the front to protect him from someone who might try to push him into the ocean and drown him.

Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen took a photo of her great-grandfather in the parka during his travels and visits with Inuit families in Canada's Arctic in the 1920s, Awa said.

The photo, which dates back to 1922, was published in the book Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English.

"To wear it (the design) is almost like (a) mockery of my great-grandfather's spiritual well-being," Awa said. "There's no other garment like it anywhere else in this world."

London-based label KTZ did not respond to Torstar News Service's request for comment.

KTZ unveiled the sweater as part of its Fall 2015 men's collection and the company was selling the "shaman toweling sweatshirt" online for about $845 Cdn. Toronto-based shop CNTRBND is also selling it for $925.

A model walks the runway during the KTZ show on January 11, in London, England. Right: The design from which the KTZ sweater was taken, according to Nunavut's Salome Awa. GETTY IMAGES; MYSTIC SEAPORT PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

KTZ says its clothes are known for their "raw energy and contemporary urban edge, but also for embracing ethnographic references and multiculturalism."

But the company has been accused of appropriating Indigenous designs in the past. Last year, Northern Cheyenne/Crow designer Bethany Yellowtail accused KTZ of using her designs without permission.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

VANCOUVER

'One punch' assaults lead to injury, death

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

A Vancouver-area man has suffered life-altering injuries and has been in hospital for a month after being sucker punched in the city's entertainment district.

And police — in a rare public plea made Thursday — say he's far from the only victim.

So far this year, Vancouver police have responded to 10 sudden "one punch" assaults, all leading to unsuspecting victims being knocked unconscious and suffering serious injuries. Three of the victims have died.

"This could happen to you or me walking down the street," said Vancouver police spokesman Const. Brian Montague.

'EMPEROR HAUTE COUTURE'

Woman offered $12K for nude Harper painting

When former bureaucrat Danielle Potvin first laid eyes on Stephen Harper's completely nude body, she knew she had to take him home. A painting of him, that is.

The piece shows a relaxed Harper lounging, with a discreet smile. And now it's on sale — just in time for the holidays.

Emperor Haute Couture, as it's called, made headlines in 2012 when artist Margaret Sutherland sold it to Potvin for $5,750. Now she's being offered upwards of $12,000 for it.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Margaret Sutherland, left, and Danielle Potvin with that painting. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Taxi app Ola has swapped cabs for boats in the flood-ravaged Indian city of Chennai. CONTRIBUTED/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Boats come to the rescue in India

SOUTH ASIA

Cab company sends rowers to save Chennai flood victims

An Ola boat in action. CONTRIBUTED/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A taxi company in India has swapped cabs for boats, as it ramped up efforts to rescue flood victims in the southern city of Chennai last week.

Ola, a private taxi app similar to Uber, explained on Twitter that the company had been "ferrying people out from water-logged areas" in the city after vehicles couldn't access flooded roads.

At least 175 people have died as heavy rainfall pounds Tamil Nadu and submerged parts of the state capital, Chennai, and the surrounding areas.

Schools, hospitals and homes are flooded, and more rain is expected later this week.

The idea for #OlaBoats appears to have started out as a social media joke, but quickly transformed into reality when Ola sent out its first rescue boats on Nov. 17.

The boats were manned by professional rowers and fishermen, who rescued people and provided food and drinking water for free, The Hindu reported.

The boats were equipped with two rowers and umbrellas and could ferry five to nine people per trip.

People in Chennai and across India commended the company's initiative.

"Now that's the only good news that has come out of Chennai amidst floods. Way to go," said Abhishek Jain on Twitter.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

BANGLADESH

Gunmen assault mosque

At least five assailants opened fire Thursday on devotees during evening prayers at a Shiite mosque in northern Bangladesh, leaving one person dead and three others wounded, police said.

Bogra district police Chief Mohammed Asaduzzaman said by phone that the assailants fled after the attack, which occurred just after sunset at the mosque in Haripur village.

He said a mosque official in his 70s who led the prayers died from bullet injuries and the three others were being treated at a hospital.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Shiites are a minority in Sunni-majority Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 160 million people.

The country has been rocked this year by a series of attacks allegedly carried out by radical groups. Since February, four secular bloggers, a publisher and two foreigners — an Italian aid worker and a Japanese agriculture researcher — have been killed, raising concern that religious extremism is growing.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Russia slaps Turkey with trade sanctions

RETALIATION

Dispute over downed plane intensifies

A tug-of-war over a Russian warplane shot down by a Turkish fighter jet at the border with Syria escalated Thursday, with Moscow drafting a slew of economic sanctions against Turkey and the Turkish president saying on a defiant note that his military is ready to do the same if another air intrusion happens.

The spat reflected a clash of ambitions of two strongman leaders, neither of whom appeared willing to back down and search for a compromise.

Turkey shot down the Russian Su-24 military jet on Tuesday, insisting it had violated its airspace despite repeated warnings. The incident marked the first time in half a century when a NATO member shot down a Russian plane, raising the threat of a military confrontation between the alliance and Moscow.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin denounced the Turkish action as a "treacherous stab in the back," and insisted that the plane was downed over the Syrian territory in violation of the international law.

"Until that moment, we haven't heard a clear apology from Turkey's top political leadership, or an offer to compensate for the damage or a promise to punish the criminals who committed that crime," he said in the Kremlin while receiving credentials from several ambassadors. "It gives an impression that the Turkish leadership is deliberately driving the Russian-Turkish relations into a deadlock, and we regret that."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in no mood to apologize, and warned that Ankara would act in the same way in case of another intrusion.

"Faced with the same violation today, Turkey would give the same response," Erdogan said. "It's the country that carried out the violation which should question itself and take measures to prevent it from happening again, not the country that was subjected to a violation."

Erdogan said Turkey had not specifically targeted Russia when it shot down the plane, saying it was "an automatic response" in line with its rules of engagement. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RECORDINGS

Turkey has released audio recordings of what it says are the Turkish military's repeated warnings to the pilot of a Russian bomber before it was shot down at the border with Syria — audio that grows increasingly more agitated.

A Russian airman who survived the shoot-down denied veering into Turkey's airspace "even for a single second." Turkey insists the plane was in its airspace for 17 seconds.

GREECE TENSION MOUNTS AT NORTHERN BORDER A man kneels before a Macedonian police officer in an effort to cross the border, near the northern Greek village of Idomeni, Thursday. Scores of migrants stranded at Greece's northern border have clashed with police while trying to force their way into Macedonia. GIANNIS PAPANIKOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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PARIS ATTACKS

Citizens still anxious: Experts

At a Paris train station, the zap of a pigeon getting electrocuted on the tracks is enough to send some jittery people scurrying for cover.

And in the aftermath of the devastating Nov. 13 attacks on Paris, the centre of Brussels has often been deserted as armed soldiers patrol tourist sites amid repeated government warnings that a terrorist attack is "serious and imminent."

Some experts say it will take months for Europeans to psychologically adapt to life after the Paris attacks and warn that some government measures intended to reassure people may backfire, creating instead the impression of cities under siege.

> **They look like bad guys with their faces all covered even if they are maybe very nice.**
> Lotte Achterberg on the armed soldiers in Brussels

"We go about our daily lives and every so often they're punctuated by something outrageous like a terrorist attack on an average Friday night," said Dr. David Purves of the British Psychological Society. "After that shock, something that is highly statistically unusual may suddenly feel much more likely to happen."

Purves said measures meant to reassure people, like machine-gun-toting soldiers and closed subways, might actually feel like the opposite.

"In a time of uncertainty, we may interpret these signs of safety instead as reasons to be fearful, like why would we need armed soldiers unless there was danger?"

Belgian university student Lotte Achterberg said she could certainly do without the now-ubiquitous soldiers guarding Brussels. "It's not a nice feeling to see them everywhere with their big guns," she said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED STATES

Embrace 'generosity': Obama

President Barack Obama appealed anew for acceptance of Syrian refugees, saying "so much of our greatness comes from our generosity."

In his weekly radio address broadcast Thursday, Obama noted his commitment to accept an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees this year and argued that the policy is in keeping with U.S. tradition.

Obama compared Syrian refugees to the first Pilgrims who arrived in present-day Massachusetts on the Mayflower ship in 1620. Many of them separatists from the Church of England, the Pilgrims have come to symbolize the quest for religious freedom in America.

He said he has been "touched by the generosity of Americans who've written me letters and emails in recent weeks, offering to open their homes to refugees fleeing the brutality of ISIL."

Obama's plan to receive thousands of additional Syrian refugees has come under heavy criticism in Congress and has become a key part of the 2016 presidential campaign rhetoric. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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MINNEAPOLIS

Funeral held for black man killed by police

Hundreds of people filled a Minneapolis church on Wednesday for the funeral of a black man whose death in a confrontation with police has sparked days of ongoing protests, while charges were pending against four men suspected in a shooting that wounded several of the protesters.

Impassioned speeches from pastors and Jamar Clark's relatives were occasionally interrupted by shouts and applause inside the cavernous Shiloh Temple International Ministries. Several relatives wore white T-shirts that read, "I matter," with Clark's picture on the back.

Demonstrators outside the Minneapolis's 4th Precinct. RICHARD TSONG-TAATARII/STAR TRIBUNE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Programs also adorned with a photo of Clark described the 24-year-old as a man who "liked to swim, fish, listen to music, play basketball, be with family and take trips to Charlotte, North Carolina."

"I'm still hurt," his sister, Sharice Burns, told the packed church on the city's north side. "I'm still suffering. We need justice sooner rather than later."

Clark was shot on Nov. 15 in what police say was a scuffle with officers responding to an assault of a woman in which he was a suspect. Some community members who say they saw the incident allege Clark was handcuffed when he was shot, which police have disputed. State and federal investigations are underway.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO

A march protesting the videotaped slaying of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald by a Chicago police officer is planned Friday in the city's busiest shopping district on the busiest shopping day of the year.

Organizers are trying to bring attention to the 2014 incident, in which the black teenager was shot 16 times by a white police officer.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Japanese PM mocked over annual U.S. turkey pardon

As part of a peculiar annual tradition at the White House, President Barack Obama on Wednesday granted amnesty from the dinner table to two turkeys named "Honest" and "Abe." But a translation glitch in Chinese media replaced the character for single-syllable "Abe" with the surname of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (pronounced "Ah-bay").

Several commenters in Chinese social media compared Japan's prime minister to an animal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kids bullying redheads inspired by South Park

School officials in a Boston suburb say they are outraged by a bullying incident in which a group of middle school students kicked other students with red hair during a break in classes.

A statement from Melrose Public Schools says the seventh-graders were imitating an episode from the TV cartoon series "South Park" when they sought out redheads last Friday at the Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NYPD out in force for Thanksgiving

A clown marches by heavily armed police standing guard during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York on Thursday. ANDRES KUDACKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANHATTAN

Police security heavy for annual parade

Giant balloons took to the clear, sunny sky over midtown Manhattan on Thursday for the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, with spectators lining up along the parade route and a heavy police presence keeping a watchful eye.

The parade, in its 89th year, included marching bands and floats to go along with Hello Kitty, Snoopy, Paddington and other giant balloons. The performers were expected to include Jordin Sparks, Shawn Mendes and Pat Benatar.

City officials have said there are no known, credible threats against New York following the recent attacks in Paris and a video purportedly produced by ISIL that contained video clips of Times Square. But Police Commissioner William Bratton said more than 2,500 officers will be stationed along the parade route for the Thanksgiving Day festivities — the largest number of officers the department has ever assigned to the event.

As the parade made its way through midtown Manhattan, helicopters flew overhead and officers stood on top of mobile command centre vans to watch the crowds. Police even stood on top of the marquee at Radio City Music Hall.

The parade is a traditional part of Thanksgiving, when Americans commemorate a 1621 feast shared by colonists known as Pilgrims and Native Americans in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Pamela and Tom Popp of Ridgefield, New Jersey said they've come to the city every year for the parade for at least 20 years.

"It's just a very special part of our holiday," Pamela Popp said. "We're very proud of New York City and this wonderful tradition."

Her husband said security was heavier than in past years. "I see the cops on top of Radio City," Tom Popp said. "Never saw that before."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Titan Equity Group owned three properties, including a retirement home, called Villa del Sole in Vaughan. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Titan CEO accused of misusing funds

LEGAL

Kotton says allegations 'half truths,' OSC probing

A real-estate investment company that once ran a $1-million Dream Home contest for Toronto FC is facing allegations that its chief executive officer misused investors' money to buy luxury cars, an expensive home and pay himself "excessive" management fees.

Titan Equity Group Ltd. and its CEO, Lance Kotton, raised $30.7 million from 335 investors starting in 2011 against three development properties in York Region, the Ontario Securities Commission alleges in court documents.

The Concord, Ont.-based company and Kotton were both placed into receivership by an Ontario Superior Court of Justice at the regulator's request on Nov. 16, owing $21.6 million to investors.

The OSC issued a temporary cease-trade order against Titan Equity and Kotton on Nov. 6, which has been extended to Dec. 17. No criminal charges have been laid. The OSC investigation is continuing.

Kotton says he was "ambushed" by the OSC and given no time to defend himself before his company, his home and assets were all tied up by the court.

Kotton called a Toronto Star reporter after his lawyers received an email from a reporter requesting comment on the allegations. He said he wanted to tell his side of the story.

> **They sent a receiver to itemize every item in my home.**
> CEO Lance Kotton

"They've taken my office. They sent a receiver to itemize every item in my home. They're trying to liquidate everything before I have a change to prove myself," Kotton said.

The OSC alleges the company breached securities law in four ways: unregistered trading; illegal distributions; misappropriation of investors' funds; and misleading statements to investors.

The OSC also alleges that "the misappropriation of investor funds to Kotton's personal benefit constitutes fraud."

The Titan Group has minimal cash on hand and all operating entities are in a deficit position, the OSC alleges. As well, there are no audited financial statements for 2014 and no corporate tax returns for any fiscal years, according to the OSC, and none of the entities is registered with the securities commission.

Asked about the allegations, Kotton dismissed them as "half truths." Kotton said he followed proper procedures when selling securities to investors.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ADVICE

Treat donations like an investment

More than nine in 10 Canadians follow the example of reformed miser Ebenezer Scrooge and give to charity every year, but experts advise noting his tightwad ways and treating those charitable donations like an investment.

Philanthropy professionals and charity watchdogs say that as the holiday season nears and the airwaves fill with messages of altruism, you should still analyze your chosen charities the same way you would research the purchase of mutual funds or property.

Financial adviser Kate Bahen, managing director of watchdog group Charity Intelligence Canada, says key things to look for include whether the charity's financial statements are audited and up-to-date, if the charity has an independent oversight board, and if it spends more on programs than administration and fundraising.

"People need to look at that giving as an investment," she says. "If they could bring that business brain to the giving table, I think that's where we would see such huge change in Canada for the good."

> **It's useful to be strategic in your giving.**
> Cynthia Kett, financial planner

Financial planner Cynthia Kett says it's best to form long-term relationships with charities that share your values, instead of doling out smaller gifts throughout the year.

When it comes to taxes, Kett says it's important to understand the nuances of the charitable giving tax credit.

Because the first $200 has a lower credit, married couples can save a little money by combining their donations on one return and having the higher-income spouse claim the credit.

Kett says Canadians should report their charitable donations every year, but can hold off on claiming for up to five years in order to maximize their returns. You can also use your spouse's unclaimed charitable donations towards your returns.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SURVEY

Nearly 40 per cent fought to pay bills this past year

Nearly 40 per cent of Canadians have struggled to cover their household expenses at least once in the past year, a new survey from Manulife Bank suggests.

Lines of credit were the most popular solution for those who came up short, with 33 per cent reporting that they accessed one the last time they were short on funds.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Protesters of pharmaceutical drug pricing carry signs featuring the image of **Turing Pharmaceuticals' CEO Martin Shkreli** during a protest in New York in October. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Turing reneges on cutting drug price

PHARMACEUTICALS

Rival's 99-cent version selling well

After weeks of criticism from patients, doctors and other drugmakers for hiking a life-saving medicine's price more than fifty-fold, Turing Pharmaceuticals is reneging on its pledge to cut the $750-per-pill price.

Instead, the small biotech company is reducing what it charges hospitals, by up to 50 per cent, for its parasitic infection treatment, Daraprim. Most patients' co-payments will be capped at $10 or less a month.

But insurers will be stuck with the bulk of the $750 tab. That drives up future treatment and insurance costs.

Daraprim is a 62-year-old pill whose patent expired decades ago. It's the preferred treatment for a rare parasitic infection, toxoplasmosis, which mainly threatens people with weak immune systems, such as HIV and organ transplant patients, and pregnant women, because it can kill their baby.

$750
The per-pill cost of Daraprim, Turing's parasitic infection treatment.

Turing's move comes after a pharmacy that compounds prescription drugs for individual patients, Imprimis Pharmaceuticals, started selling a custom-made version for 99 cents per capsule.

Those sales weren't a factor in Turing's pricing strategy, chief marketing officer Nancy Retzlaff said Wednesday.

Imprimis CEO Mark Baum said Wednesday orders are pouring in for its version of Daraprim from doctors, and the company has dispensed more than 2,500 capsules since Oct. 22.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COMPETITION

Relax taxi rules, bureau says

The Competition Bureau says local regulations on the taxi industry need to be overhauled to deal with new competition from alternatives like the ride-hailing service Uber.

New competitors have gained market share by undercutting the fixed prices of existing cabs and skirting regulations for the industry.

The bureau says that has created an uneven playing field, and cities and provinces should balance the scales by easing rules on taxis rather than looking to increase regulations.

Canadians spent almost $1.2 billion on taxis in 2014. A report prepared by Ottawa's local authorities in October found Uber prices average around 36 per cent less than a comparable cab fare.

Cities control taxi licensing and the number of taxi permits, and in some areas the value of a so-called taxi plate has reached six digits. The Ottawa report found the cost of a single taxi plate in Toronto in 2012 was as high as $360,000.

The Competition Bureau said among other changes regulators should ease price controls and allow taxi fares to be adjusted to fit with demand, as Uber's are, remove the cap on the number of taxi plates and let additional qualified drivers work for hire, and provide incentives for drivers to operate accessible vehicles in areas where consumers are underserved. THE CANADIAN PRESS

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Weekend, November 27-29, 2015

Bird bath blues
Scientists can't explain why water-loving British starlings have been drowning in large groups for the past 20 years.

READERS RESPOND: MELITA'S STORY

In the Nov. 25 issue of Metro, one of our editors shared a personal tale of fleeing to Canada at the age of nine, after her father was imprisoned at a concentration camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina simply for being Muslim. Dozens of readers have reached out with good wishes — and emotional refugee and immigration stories of their own.

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'We were one of the lucky ones'

As the country prepares to welcome thousands of Syrian refugees, a Metro editor recalls how her family built a happy life in Canada after escaping a war zone

Melita Kuburas
Metro Canada

Bosnian refugee tells of odyssey to freedom

Journey through history

From the archives ...

"Welcoming refugees is very generous of Canada, and of Canadians, but I can assure you: refugees are not freeloading."

"I think this will open a lot of readers' eyes"
Hi Melita,

Every day, I commute and read Metro in the morning. Most of the times, I scan headlines and doze off to music I have playing. But this morning, I was glued to your story, and I really appreciate how you have shared your own personal experience. I think this will open a lot of readers' eyes to the current refugee issue.

Shuang Shan

As an immigrant myself, although I came under much better circumstances, I was very moved by your family's story.

"It is a welcome antidote to all the recent negativity"
Melita,

Thank you for your fine article. It is a welcome antidote to all the recent negativity surrounding Syrian refugees and Muslims. As an immigrant myself, although I came here under much better circumstances, I was very moved by your family's story.

Keep up the good work,

David Bednar

"I am so glad that you were able to survive"
Good morning Melita,

While I have been a supporter of the Liberals' plan to bring in the 25,000 refugees, I will readily admit that I haven't spent too much time thinking about the individuals truly affected, who are waiting to be screened and authorized by the UN and Canadian government.

Your story provides a true example of how difficult it must've been for your family to transition to life in Canada. I am so glad that you and your family were able to survive and thrive in this country, and it makes me so grateful for what my family has really taken for granted.

Just know that your story has touched at least one person today, though I have no doubt that it will touch the hearts of millions.

Take care,

Jennifer Hiltz

"I am the son of a political refugee from Hungary"
Dear Melita,

Many thanks for the nice article. The front-page pictures hit hard in a good way. I am the son of a political refugee from Hungary who refused to go back to the communist ways after the failed revolution of 1956. The pictures of your dad are a great resemblance to my dad, and they brought me to tears. He has been gone now for almost 12 years, but he was the most patriotic Canadian I know. He married my mom, a French-Canadian, and raised us three boys on a great work ethic and a huge respect for democracy. When I enlisted as an army reservist with the Governor General's Foot Guards (Yes, those soldiers on Parliament Hill) to assist with paying my way through four years of college, he beamed with pride.

I could say much more, and so could you. I am sure enough of a heartfelt story is there to provide material for a book!

Merci beaucoup! Thanks again! Köszönöm szépen!

Michel Imre Zoltan Joseph Asbóth

"I hope and pray that other refugees succeed"
Hi Melita,

Thank you for sharing your refugee story. Your parents are so courageous and strong. I'm sure it was incredibly difficult for them and huge sacrifices were made, but they did it for you and your brother.

I can't imagine the difficulty of risking your life with your children, and even the days and nights spent in whichever place you were allowed to stop or rest. It was important that you shared this story, since many people don't realize what immigrants have gone through.

Me and my family also immigrated to this country, and we all know for a fact that we have to work or study hard in order to prove our worth to Canadian society, most especially to those who claim they are the "true Canadians."

I am really fascinated by tales of migration and refugee stories, and I am so pleased that everything worked out well for your family.

I hope and pray that other refugees succeed in their new homes and new lives. I always believe in humanity's faith, hope and compassion despite the recent conflicts and stigma of terrorism haunting the world.

Thanks and regards,

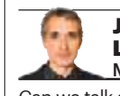
Czarjeff Laban

Melita Kuburas is an associate managing editor at Metro. You can read her story at metronews.ca. She can be reached at melita.kuburas@metronews.ca.

LETTERS HAVE BEEN CONDENSED

metroview

If we think outside the mailbox, we can build real community



Jason Logan
Metro Toronto

Can we talk about community mailboxes?

By now you've no doubt picked your side, either with the robot-loving erstwhile PM and his ugly, grey mailbox banks, or with the more robust-haired champion of door-to-door delivery.

But the election is over and the outcome is clear: Community mailboxes are out. So why now talk of sides? Don't we have more pressing concerns? The phase-out of home delivery has been scrapped in mid-flow: in 2014, Canada Post converted 100,000 addresses to community boxes; in 2015, it had planned to do 900,000 more. At least 460,000 of those conversions were already underway, meaning there must be tens of thousands of community mailboxes sitting in warehouses, destined for the garbage heap and the "sunk costs" column.

What if "community mailboxes" isn't an oxymoron?

Don't get me wrong. I, like you, have seen the prophylactic maple-leaf decal and the back-angled roof meant to protect the boxes from snow and rain while making no such accommodation for users. They don't just look like they were designed by a committee of engineers; they actually were. Plus, I love my mail carrier.

Here's the thing, though: In an era of Facetime and delivery drones, communication is at a crossroads, if not a crisis. This should be an opportunity to rethink, not sentimentalize.

I recently met with the governor general at the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto, and he noted that when a group of people picks up mail in a central place, they create a little community. I led a workshop this summer on this point: how to turn these boxes into community assets. Eventually we were contacted by a Canada Post representative, who said, "We are listening." But listening is not enough.

In urban centres and suburbs, where the community-mailbox fight has been fiercest, there remains, despite bars and bookstores, a need for places to gather 'round. A shared box could become a mini town square: a place to pick up news, ideas and seeds for the garden.

Or what if we got rid of the boxes but kept the idea of central mail pickup? What if packages flowed in and out of your local coffee shop? What if Canada Post stores sold vintage stamps, postcards and stationery? What if the postal workers were trained in community policing and home care? What if getting the mail meant leaving your house, looking up from your phone and finding common ground?

"Stop right there!" you say. We can't afford to play and experiment. I say we can't afford not to. It's with what-ifs that we start a process of thinking outside the slanty-roofed box and remaking our country.

My name is Jason. I did not vote for Harper, and I'm kind of into community mailboxes.

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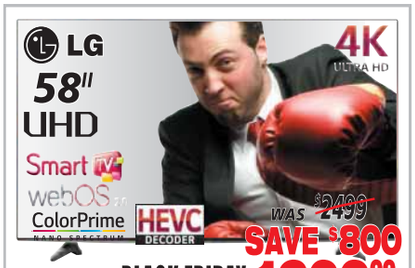

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Radcliffe keeps his ego in check

CELEBRITY

Actor doesn't see his status as actually being about him

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Harry Potter no more: Daniel Radcliffe stars as Igor in Victor Frankenstein, a dynamic and thrilling twist on a legendary tale.
HANDOUT

At the 2012 Canadian premier of The Woman in Black a young woman yelled, "I love you!" as Daniel Radcliffe and I took the stage to introduce the film.

"I love you too," he replied with a smirk. "But I think we should see other people."

The audience laughed but probably missed the double meaning of his comment. For ten years Radcliffe was the face of Harry Potter, one of the biggest grossing movie franchises ever. Potter ended in 2011 (for Radcliffe, anyway) and the actor has moved on, and hopes his audience will follow along.

This week he's taking on another classic character, one played in the past by everyone from Bela Lugosi to Marty Feldman. In Victor Frankenstein he transcends Igor's traditional, "Yes master," function to become the movie's moral compass and emotional core. A reimagining of the Frankenstein story that focuses on the men rather than the monster, it's a change of pace from an actor who likes to shake it up, career-wise.

"I want to try my hand at as many things as possible," he told me in 2014. "Having played one character for a very long time, that builds up in you a desire to play a number of different characters and do as much different work as you can. I like that you can't predict what my next thing is going to be."

Since Potter wrapped he has kept audiences guessing. From the Gothic horror of Woman in Black and The F Word's light romance to a biographical look at the Beat Generation in Kill Your Darlings and the twisted morality of Horns, the only predictable thing about his career is its unpredictability.

"It's about finding out what I'm good at, finding out which things I prefer doing because I've only done Potter up until a few years ago, so now this period is really me going, 'If I had my choice.'

Being that I do have a semblance of control over my career, — which most actors my age don't — I feel I might not always have this opportunity to try loads of different things."

Radcliffe credits working with the likes of Alan Rickman, Gary Oldman and David Tennant on the Potter films with giving him some perspective on how to manage his career.

"The defining feature of Alan, Gary, David and many more that I've worked with, is that they never want to stop learning," Radcliffe told me during an interview for The Women in Black.

"They never feel they are finished. Alan Rickman is constantly trying to get better and refined. When you see that in someone who is A) Brilliant and B) 30 years older than you, it's very inspiring to see they have gone through their whole careers and never been satisfied."

Radcliffe has perspective on where he'd like his career to go, but what about the fame that came along with playing Harry Potter? The next day after The Woman in Black premier I asked him about the screaming fans that greeted him and what that does to his ego.

"The thing you have to remind yourself is that it's not about me. It's about the fact that I played this character who became beloved. Anyone who took on this character would be getting this reaction. When I'm home, smoking a cigarette and it's cold and I'm eating half a pizza — you have to take a picture of yourself then and play it to yourself when you're on the red carpets and go, 'Yeah, you're not all that.'"

MOVIE RATINGS
by Richard Crouse

Creed ★★★★
The Good Dinosaur ★★★
Victor Frankenstein ★★★
Trumbo ★★★

HOW RATING WORKS
★★★★ SEE IT
★★★ WORTHWHILE
★★ UP TO YOU
★ SKIP IT

Radcliffe, McAvoy talk new beginnings

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

Actors reflect on God, creating life and fresh starts

Luba Egorova
Metro | New York

In Victor Frankenstein, James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe join a long tradition of actors, usually British (or Scottish), playing Mary Shelley's mad scientist and his assistant. But they are the first to play with this dynamic: Instead of Frankenstein's lowly, hunchbacked helper, Igor is a dandy and a medical genius in his own regard. It also allowed the two actors to goof around on the set of a particularly nutty what-if.

This is your first time working together but you seem to have a mutual admiration. So what was your relationship like on set?
James McAvoy: When I have to work with people I don't like, and I think they are really horrible. I generally never argue with them either. We got on really well. There was no arguing.

Daniel Radcliffe: Yeah. I think that the image people have of actors being like constantly at war with each other isn't generally the case.

What is your relationship with science? What grades did you get at school in physics and chemistry?
M: I didn't take physics. But I did take chemistry and biology for a very short time. And in chemistry, I think I got a C, and in biology a B-. And then when I grew old enough to choose subjects I would specialize in, I dropped them both and took English and music. I always enjoyed science at school and I enjoy hearing scientists and talk about science. But I'm definitely glad I don't have to learn it or do it.

We are all going to die someday. Would you like to be raised from the dead by some genius?
R: Yeah, as long as I'm the only one. (Laughs) And he won't do it to everybody, so that there are lots of dead walking around. I'd like to think about myself as special.

Daniel Radcliffe, left, and James McAvoy star in Victor Frankenstein, opening this weekend.
CONTRIBUTED

Creating life is like playing God. Do you believe in God? Have you ever wanted to challenge God?
M: Yeah.

R: No.

M: Even people with great faith and those who have a close relationship to God challenge him, like his son. We all challenge things we believe.

Victor is challenging God. "I can do it better" — that's what he's saying. There is an idea of god-creator and the idea of faith. We are moving towards it every day, trying to become people. It's an everyday life. And that is what the Frankenstein story is about.

At the beginning of the film, Daniel's character doesn't have a name. Do you know this feeling? Have you ever wanted to start anew?
R: As actors we put a mask on and become nobody and anonymous in that way. In real life, you often don't want to be well known nor famous, and sometimes I remember I didn't want to be an actor any more.

M: The nice thing about being an actor is that on every single job, it's like a clean slate — a new director, new crew, may be even a new country, new language, all that kind of stuff.

And you kind of go, "Alright, that last job was a f— ing nightmare."

Maybe I wasn't who I wanted to be or wasn't at my best. But what is great about acting is that you are not pretending to be someone else but try to be your better self.

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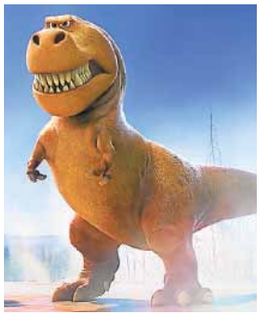

ANIMATION

The Good Dinosaur

Director: Peter Sohn
Starring: Raymond Ochoa, Jeffrey Wright

What if the cataclysmic asteroid that forever changed life on Earth actually missed the planet completely and giant dinosaurs never became extinct?

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 81% Audience: 81%

DRAMA

Trumbo

Director: Jay Roach
Starring: Bryan Cranston, Alan Tudyk

In 1947, Dalton Trumbo was Hollywood's top screenwriter until he and other artists were jailed and blacklisted for their political beliefs. The film recounts how Dalton used words and wit to win two Academy Awards and expose the absurdity and injustice under the blacklist.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 73% Audience: 76%

DRAMA

Creed

Director: Ryan Coogler
Starring: Sylvester Stallone, Michael B. Jordan

Adonis Johnson never knew his famous father, world heavy weight champion Apollo Creed, who died before he was born. Still, there's no denying that boxing is in his blood, so Adonis heads to Philadelphia, the site of Apollo Creed's legendary match with Rocky Balboa.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 92% Audience: 96%

DRAMA

Victor Frankenstein

Director: Paul McGuigan
Starring: James McAvoy, Daniel Radcliffe

James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe star in a dynamic and thrilling twist on a legendary tale. Radical scientist Victor Frankenstein and his equally brilliant protégé Igor Strausman share a noble vision of aiding humanity.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 22% Audience: 54%

ART HOUSE

Legend

Director: Brian Helgeland
Starring: Tom Hardy, Emily Browning

The true story of the rise and fall of London's most notorious gangsters, Reggie and Ronnie Kray, who captivated the public and once upon a time lorded over a criminal empire. This classic crime thriller takes us into the secret history of the 1960s and the extraordinary events that secured the infamy of the Kray Twins.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 59% Audience: 74%

DRAMA/ACTION

The Hunger Games - Mockingjay 2

Director: Francis Lawrence
Starring: Jennifer Lawrence, Julianne Moore

With the nation of Panem in a full-scale war, Katniss confronts President Snow in the final showdown. Teamed with a group of other fighters, Katniss goes off on a mission to liberate the citizens of Panem.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 71% Audience: 75%

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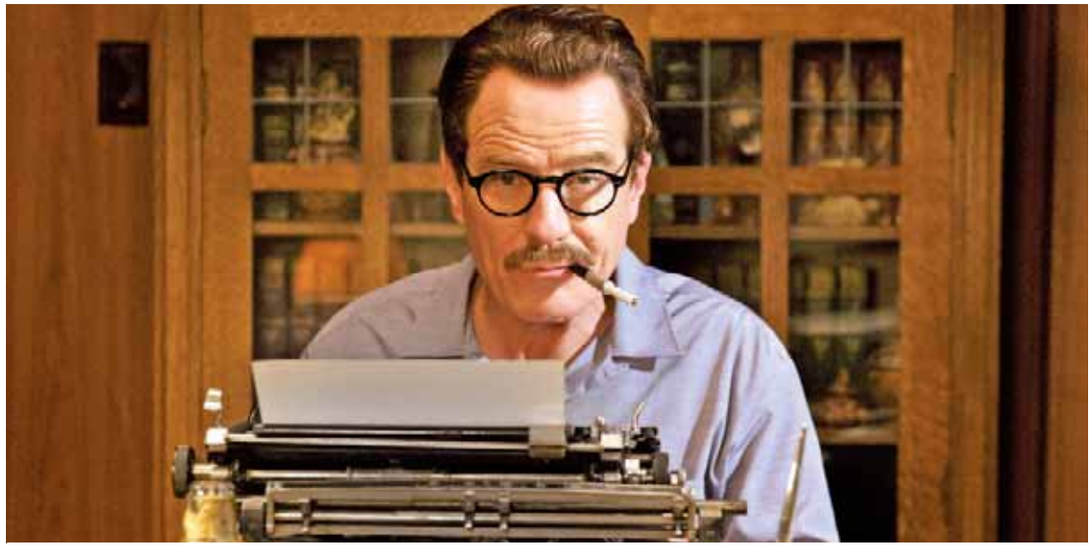
The communist who didn't name names

NEW FILM

Bryan Cranston talks Dalton Trumbo's moral stance

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada



Bryan Cranston plays blacklisted Hollywood writer Dalton Trumbo in Trumbo, opening this weekend. CONTRIBUTED

For a brief time Dalton Trumbo was the highest paid writer in Hollywood, which also meant he was the highest paid writer in the world.

He was a family man, a wealthy and proud American communist whose career was sidelined by The Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals.

A new film called Trumbo, starring Breaking Bad's Bryan Cranston, tells the story of how the Academy Award winning screenwriter was reduced to penning scripts for b-movies like The Alien and the Farm Girl.

"Under the first amendment you have the right to free speech and Trumbo felt very strongly about that," says Cranston.

"He thought it was un-American and unconstitutional for the House Un-American Activities Committee to hold these hearings and demand under threat of contempt of Congress that people answer these questions.

The questions were things like: Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party? And, if so, to save yourself, renounce it now and tell us who else was a member.

The committee wanted these people to give names so they could go after more people.

"It's fundamentally wrong and he felt that was wrong and unconstitutional to ask that question," says Cranston of Trumbo's reaction.

Trumbo didn't name names and paid a heavy price, losing his lofty Hollywood perch and almost his family.

"In a way I relate to Trumbo," says Cranston, but admits he's not sure what he would do if his career was ever placed in a similar kind of jeopardy.

"What would you do if they subpoenaed you and said, 'We want to know who else likes baseball? Who is it?' Would you point the finger at other people who found enjoyment out of playing baseball?

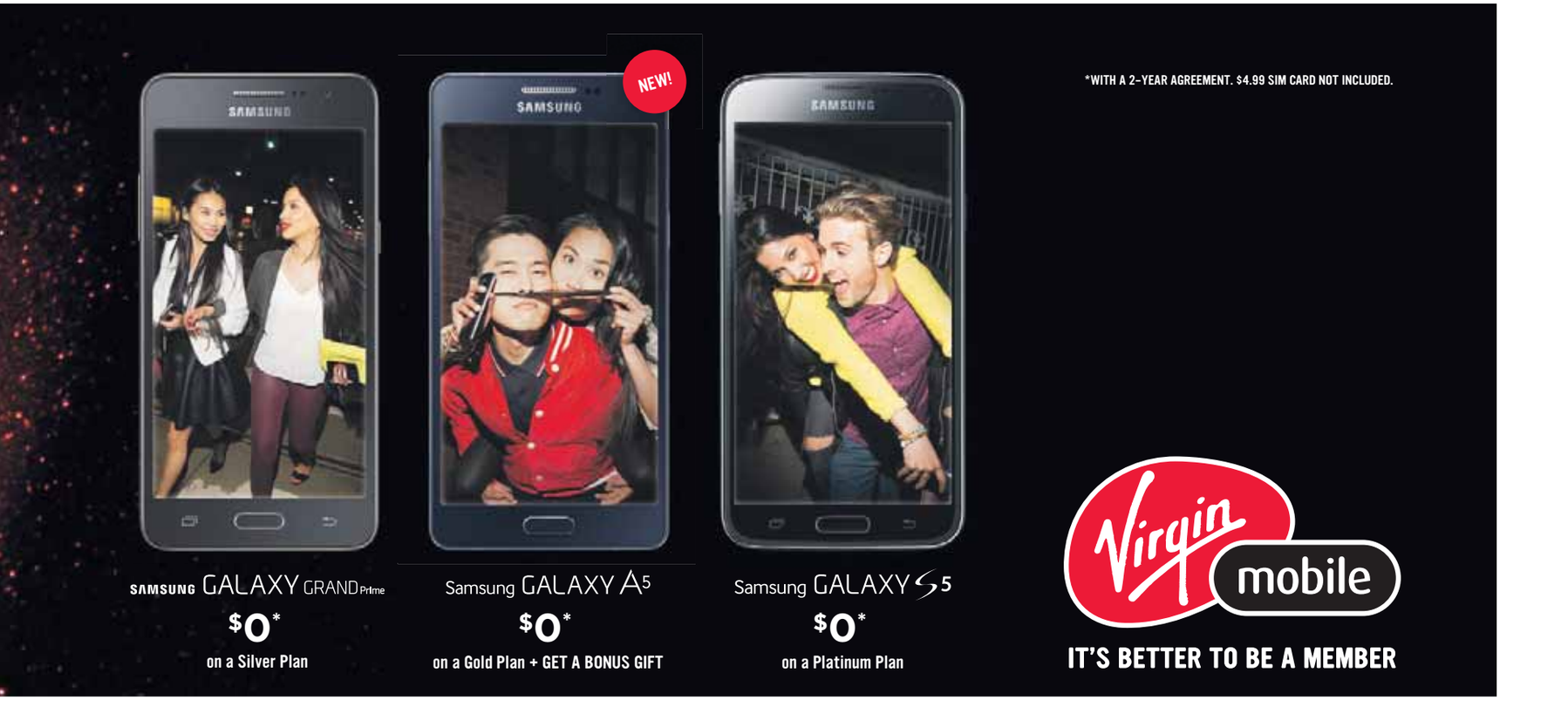
"Of course I would love to think I would be honourable and not do it, but I have to be honest and say, that's a hypothetical. I think I would be resistant to that pressure and perhaps even pay the price, but do I know for sure? No.

"I don't know for a certainty because I'm not faced with it."

After wrapping his five-season career-making run as Breaking Bad's Walter White, Cranston has kept busy, winning a Tony Award for playing Lyndon B. Johnson on Broadway in All the Way and has eight films in various stages of completion. He made time for Trumbo because "the story itself is brilliant and that is the first thing I look for," but admits he's gotten picky about the parts he plays.

"I don't want to now take a job for money. I take jobs because I'm attracted to them by the creative element or because it challenges me in some way and my agents are incentivized to work out the best deal they can.

"I don't want to portray this idea that I'm just about the art. I've been poor and I've been rich and rich is better."



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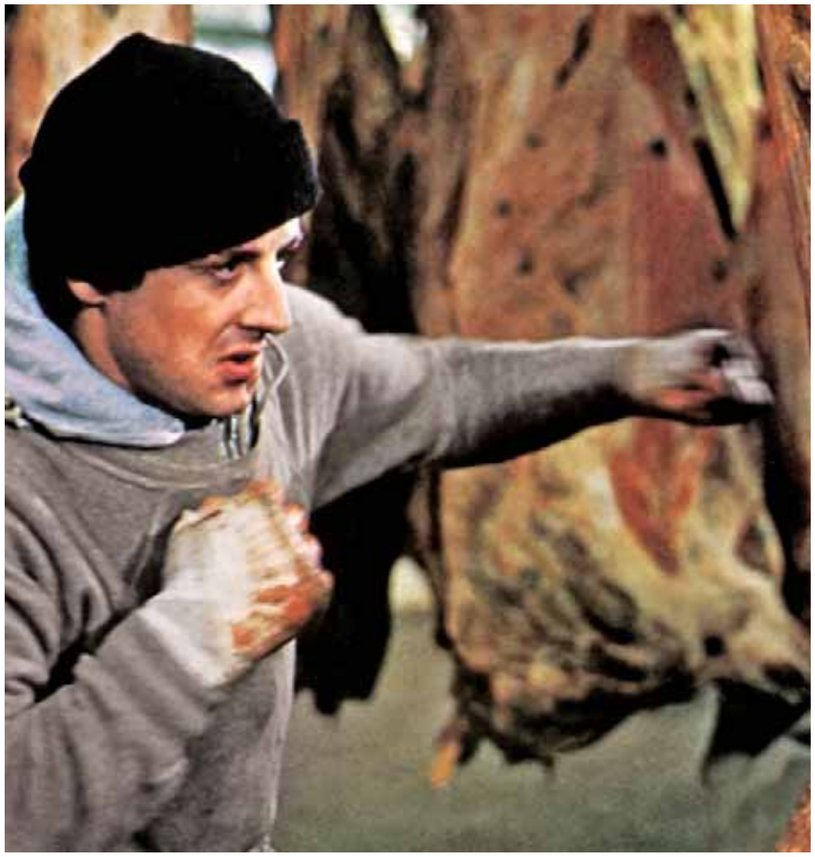
IT'S THE FINAL COUNTDOWN METRO RANKS ROCKY

The Rocky series gets a semi-spinoff with Creed. And for the first time, Sylvester Stallone's storied underdog isn't the centrepiece. This one follows Apollo Creed's son, Adonis, with Rocky as his mentor. So how does it stack up to the others? Here's our ranking, from best to worst. MATT PRIGGE/METRO NEW YORK



1 Rocky (1976)

Along with Jaws the year prior and Star Wars the year after, the first Rocky is often credited with helping break the gritty, downer streak that had come to somewhat (if by no means entirely) dominate Hollywood in the '70s. But it's still pretty downer and gritty, and it doesn't end with our palooka pugilist even winning. What its many, many knockoffs get wrong is that it's not just about the melodrama and a cheer-able close. Sylvester Stallone's Rocky really has his hills and valleys before he hits the mountaintop. Also often neglected: Stallone's performance, which is so lived-in, so lively, so genuinely lovable that it's easy to take for granted.

2 Creed (2015)

The first movie to feature Stallone's Rocky without being written (and in four cases, directed) by Stallone, Creed is technically fan-fiction, courtesy Fruitvale Station maker Ryan Coogler. But it balances honouring the classics with being its own thing, feeling fresh even when it's pounding out a classic training montage or a big climactic bout. Michael B. Jordan's Adonis — the aspiring boxer son of dead-and-gone Rocky rival-turned-bud Apollo Creed — may be the lead, but Rocky doesn't just pass the torch. Even after four decades, Stallone is able to find new notes inside a character who has aged from Rocky from the block to a superstar, back to a guy who's back on the block, mourning the many who've passed on.

3 Rocky III (1982)

The sequels — before the genuinely melancholic revival Rocky Balboa in 2005 — turned increasingly silly and outsized to match a star who himself turned silly and outsized. The third is at least deeply entertaining, no less because it has a villain — Mr. T's Clubber Lang — whose personality is so big and charismatic he threatens to hijack the entire franchise. At least Stallone the director had evolved. He was among the first in Hollywood to adopt a punchier MTV esthetic to mainstream filmmaking (and thus made the movies shorter by about 20 minutes). As Matt Zoller Seitz illustrated in a video piece about Stallone's filmmaking, the difference between the sleepier '70s training montages of II and the jazzed-up one in III is chasmic.

4 Rocky Balboa (2006)

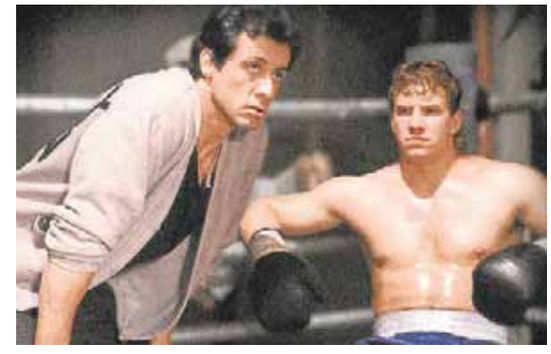
The '90s were spotty for Stallone, and the first half of the '00s were abysmal, the star bottoming out with DTV fare like Avenging Angelo and the disastrous (and disastrously titled) Eye See You. You could cynically say he was just being cynical when he dusted Rocky off (and then Rambo, too), but he took the return seriously, in part because he wanted to give a noble send-off to a character who'd gone out like a chump in the little-loved Rocky V. Balboa is in many ways stubborn: at times sleepy and old-fashioned, even spotty, but it's also deeply felt. Even its appropriations of the original, including the same ending, feel sincere, devoted to a character who feels as real as Stallone himself, if not more so.

5 Rocky II (1979)

In the first Rocky, Balboa felt so vivid it would be a shame to let him go. Though technically Rocky II is a rematch movie, pitting him back against Weathers' Apollo, it also seriously considers what would happen to a Regular Joe like Rocky. After an initial flush of fame and money, he winds up forgotten round. It's not a perfect film, and the protracted Adrian-in-a-coma stretch is one twist too many.

6 Rocky IV (1985)

It was peak Reagan for the actor/filmmaker, with Rocky sent to fight the evil Soviets, and Rocky IV feels especially ridiculous. There's sledgehammer moves like showing Rocky running up actual mountains while Dolph Lundgren's Ivan Drago gets pumped full of drugs and half the movie is montages, as though Stallone shot it and realized he'd only made 45 minutes of movie.



7 Rocky V (1990)

The fifth — and for a long time, it seemed, final Rocky — has Rocky return home, losing all of his riches and returning to his old stomping grounds to start anew, this time as a mentor. The Rockys are often compared to old-timey melodramas, but V is the only one that goes way into the sappy, even having Rocky play tutor to a kid (Tommy Morrison, a real fighter) who proves too easily corruptible.

Scaredy-dino echoes director's own fears

The Good Dinosaur marks Pixar artist Peter Sohn's directorial debut. CONTRIBUTED

PETER SOHN

Young dino finds out what he's made, as the director did

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

When Peter Sohn joined Pixar Studios 15 years ago as a story artist on Finding Nemo, he would've never dreamed that he'd someday be directing his very own movie. Even now, with his debut family epic The Good Dinosaur, he's quick to give credit to the animation empire.

"People at Pixar — they really support you," said Sohn in Toronto about his quick rise through various departments at the animation house. "I remember working in L.A. and when you were done with a project, you were laid off. That's not the case at Pixar — once you're done with a project, you're able to move to another project (and) it becomes more about doing your best."

For Sohn, his finest work included important contributions to such box-office hits as The Incredibles and Monsters University — not to mention lending voice work to supporting characters in such films as Oscar-winner Ratatouille.

"In the story department, you're always pitching your scenes so you're doing the voices," admitted Sohn about how he stumbled into voice work as well as an animation. "It does give you a lot of learning too (for) directing other people."

The truth is, The Good Dinosaur relies heavily on Sohn's personal experiences as well as his professional success. Set within the premise that dinosaurs never went extinct, Sohn's feature follows the Jurassic journey of a stray Apatosaurus trying to overcome his fears while trekking home with a young Neanderthal amigo.

"It didn't set out to be a parallel but it became that," admitted Sohn. Like most good fantasy, the film's themes echo real life. After all, Arlo the Apatosaurus's challenge to find out what he's really made of mirrors Sohn's struggles with his own self-confidence as a young Korean immigrant artist in America.

"When fear stops me from doing what I need to do; when I feel like I'm not worth anything (and) I'm trying to find a way to get through it," explained Sohn. "It was always the love of movies and the love of my family and people around me — there was always that answer. What a simple concept — you can't get rid of fear but you can always get through it."

EYES HAVE IT

It's all in the pupils

Part of Pixar's success has been by anthropomorphizing animals in their animated hits. As Sohn explains, much of that is in humanizing the eyes.

"(We) have charts on eyes and how to break down an eyebrow, pupil size, placement of pupil," said the longtime Pixar and Disney filmmaker. "I can't tell you how much you study the eyes and find gestures of thoughtfulness."

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THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

'If all of the people who hate Ishtar had seen it,' director Elaine May said in 2006, 'I would be a rich woman today.'

It's not often that you say to your partner, "Honey, how about we watch Ishtar tonight!"

Even unlikelier? The response: "The 1987 critical and commercial flop starring Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty and written and directed by Elaine May? Uh, yes, please!"

Let me explain how we got there: After passing back and forth last Sunday's New York Times Magazine cover story, The Women of Hollywood Speak Out by Maureen Dowd, we were puzzled. Not by the infuriating stats — only 1.9 per cent of the 100 top grossing films from 2013 and 2014 were directed by women, for example — but by the conflicting thesis and conclusion.

There's nostalgia for a time when old Hollywood churned out roles for complicated, messy women — when "Hollywood moguls actually cared about art." There's admiration for women, like Transparent's Jill Soloway and Girls' Lena Dunham, who are making female-driven shows; praise for producers who are championing women's voices and stories; and lamentations by the likes of Penny Marshall for studios' love of Superman and Batman.

Yes, yes and yes! I thought. Hollywood doesn't want you pulling up a chair at their buffet of insipid entertainment, ladies? Then start cooking up something new and improved!

But then, the story ends with a 35-year-old female director asking "Why can't I direct Superman?"

So the solution for more female driven projects is to have a woman helm another Superman? That will solve the gender imbalance in Hollywood? Won't that just reinforce the infantilizing trends that seem to dominate North American culture?

"Joining men in the race to the bottom in terms of the culture might be equitable," my partner Simon argued, "but it's not enlightened. If women aspire towards parity in the Hollywood superhero genre, I'm not so sure I'd call it an achievement."

But it was a quote from a young female director about women not being able to recover after a flop the way male directors do that turned light bulbs on over our heads: "These dudes, man," Leslye Headland, who "wants to be a Martin Scorsese" — and not just a female version — told Dowd. "Spielberg and Cassavetes and Woody Allen have all made some unwatchable movies. But it's Elaine May and Ishtar you remember. It's not Elaine May's fault. Poor Elaine."

Although post-Ishtar she's written some superb scripts, including Primary Colours and the Birdcage, May hasn't directed a movie since.

"If all of the people who hate Ishtar had seen it," May said in 2006, "I would be a rich woman today."

So, that's how we got to Ishtar, which we'd never seen. And guess what? We loved it. (Martin Scorsese does, too.) The film, about two hilariously talentless lounge singers who perform in Morocco and get involved in a plot to overthrow the government in the fictional neighbouring country of Ishtar, was far funnier than our controversial dinner.

I said I'd bring home falafel. Simon said falafel isn't Moroccan. I said no kidding. But Ishtar isn't even a real place so we can eat whatever we want. Just as long as we tip our hats to Elaine May.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

FILM BRIEF

Rock the Kasbah year's biggest box-office bomb

According to Forbes, the comedy vehicle Rock The Kasbah starring the usually hugely bankable Bill Murray only recouped 19.13 per cent of its costs at the cinema, making it 2015's biggest box-office disappointment.

The annual list yet again shows that even with the hottest of Hollywood stars in leading roles, there is no guarantee of success.

Actors making this year's list include Bradley Cooper (Aloha), Johnny Depp (Mortdecai), George Clooney (Tomorrowland), Channing Tatum (Jupiter Ascending), and Zac Efron (We Are Your Friends).

The second biggest flop of the year is Sean Penn vehicle The Gunman which he co-wrote and co-produced. Michael Mann-directed Blackhat staring Chris Hemsworth is in third place, while Vince Vaughn comedy Unfinished Business is in fourth and Jem and the Holograms is in fifth place.

The full list can be found at Forbes. AFP

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TOM HOLLAND

Somersaulting into Spidey role

Tom Holland dug into his musical theatre roots, and his acrobatic skills, to land the role of the next Spider-Man.

The 19-year-old played Billy Elliott on London's West End so when he was preparing an audition tape, he put his physical abilities to good use.

"I basically did a somersault into frame and a somersault out of frame and I was like, 'They may never see this but if they do I need them to know that I've got some gymnastics abilities and stuff,'" the actor said during a recent interview. "And every tape I sent in I always did a little acrobatic demo to try and convince them to give me the role," he said, laughing.

Holland spoke about the breakout role while promoting In the Heart of the Sea, opening Dec. 11, a Ron Howard sea survival film based on a non-fiction book of the same name. Holland plays a young cabin boy on a whaling ship in the 1800s that is hit by a bull sperm whale which splits the boat in half. The crew is then shipwrecked at sea for 90 days where they must resort to cannibalism to survive.

Holland's character is put through the ringer and spends much of the movie wet and covered in oil.

"I always like a challenge and I almost feel like if something's not a challenge there's no real point in doing it," he said. "The hard work we had to do was for the right reasons and pivotal for the film because we were making a film about real people."

Landing the role as one of Marvel's marquee superheroes was the realization of a dream for the young actor, who was asked by an interviewer years ago which superhero he would want to play if he got the chance.

"I of course said Spider-Man. I said I would like to do the reboot after Andrew Garfield. I don't think Andrew Garfield had even made his second film yet. I always wanted to play this character and when I found out that they were recasting the role I rang up my agent and I said, 'Just get me a self- tape. Please let me send something so that they can see me.'"

Holland makes his debut as Peter Parker and his alter ego Spider-Man in the next Captain America movie, out next year. He will then lead his own Spider-Man film.

Fans will have to wait to get a glimpse of Holland as the web slinger — Spider-Man isn't shown in a Captain America: Civil War trailer released Tuesday, and a script for the standalone film is being finalized.

He said director Jon Watts is purposely not sharing details with him "because he wants to only tell me ideas that they're gonna use. I just really can't wait to get to work."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tom Holland realized a dream when he landed the role of Spider-Man. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Critics embrace Nixon's new role

Nixon plays a terminally-ill mother in the upcoming drama James White. CONTRIBUTED

JAMES WHITE

Stepping out of SATC shadow, Nixon drawing Oscar buzz

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

It's been over a decade since Sex and the City ended its run on HBO and while the hit television series' stars have remained shrouded in the shadow of its success, Cynthia Nixon is finally stepping into the spotlight.

Starring in a forthcoming biopic about poet Emily Dickinson and recurring as a therapist in the upcoming season of Showtime's hit drama The Affair, the SATC actress is finally breaking out from being only recognized as Miranda Hobbes.

"It was a great time in just about every way," recalled Nixon recently of the classic series.

"Least of which was how deliciously the scripts were written and all the fun things you got to do. Its fun to have an ensemble like that (when) you mesh so well."

However, once the series ended, the twice-Emmy winning star found herself trying to shake the tyranny of typecasting. Instead of simply taking easy money because producers "think you should be doing romantic parts," Nixon chose to be cautiously selective — a choice that's finally paying off.

"I'll be 50 next year and the thing about getting older is there are fewer parts but the good news is, if you can get them, they're really interesting," said Nixon.

Specifically, she cites her latest portrayal as a terminally-ill mother dealing with a slouch son in the award-winning drama, James White — a role that's even drawing early Oscar buzz.

"When (producers) make movies about people dying of diseases, a common trap is that they set up a very two-dimensional character and then it's all about the disease," said Nixon, humbly crediting her positive reviews to filmmaker Josh Mond.

"People are very moved by the story (and) what's wonderful is how personally it hits people."

But James White also struck Nixon intimately.

Just before shooting the film, her own mother succumbed to cancer — a somber circumstance that only informed and emboldened her even more to the character.

"I would've taken the part regardless of the situation but because of my situation, I was better equipped to do it," admitted Nixon.

"So even though it was of course sad at times, I think making the movie made me feel closer to my mother."

MOVIES

Cynthia Nixon's early career role model

Nixon may have started acting as a kid, but she always focused on the field for her career.

As such, one of her idols became actress (and Gwyneth Paltrow's mother) Blythe Danner after Nixon worked with her on stage.

"I was so impressed with not only her unbelievable skill, beauty and charm but what a rich, full life she had and how devoted she was to her kids," said Nixon. "She was a big role model for me."

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Eddie Redmayne stars in The Danish Girl. CONTRIBUTED

HOLLYWOOD

Transgender issues in expanding spotlight

The Danish Girl, a film about transgender pioneer Lili Elbe, hits U.S. theatres this week, riding on a wave of growing cultural awareness and media attention on LGBT issues.

The movie, by British director Tom Hooper (The King's Speech), tells the story of Danish artist Einar Wegener, who underwent one of the first sex reassignment surgeries of the 20th century and became known as Lili Elbe.

Appearing at the Los Angeles premiere of the movie over the weekend, actor Eddie Redmayne said he was very much ignorant of transgender issues when he first read the script about four years ago.

"I fell into all the cliches of ignorance," he told reporters. "I didn't realize that gender and sexuality weren't related."

Redmayne said he spent months researching his character and LGBT issues.

"There hasn't been much progress except in the last few years, where there has been a sea change," Redmayne said.

That change is reflected in a number of TV series that deal with transgender issues, like Transparent and Orange is The New Black, and the publicized transition earlier this year of Caitlyn Jenner.

President Barack Obama's administration has also championed LGBT issues, hiring the first openly transgender staff member at the White House, where The Danish Girl was screened on Monday.

Despite all the work still left to do, David Ebershoff, author of the novel published in 2000 that inspired the film, and others agree there is no going around the fact that a page has been turned for the transgender community.

The Danish Girl opens in Toronto on Dec. 11 and elsewhere in Canada through December and the new year. Redmayne is seen as a strong contender for an Oscar for his moving performance as Lili. AFP

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Revenant shoot a feat

Leonardo DiCaprio in The Revenant. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILDERNESS EPIC

Director, star discuss brutal challenges of making the film

Filming the harrowing wilderness epic The Revenant was like "rock climbing without a rope," director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (Birdman) told a crowd at one of the first public screenings of the film. "There is no way down," Inarritu said. "You have to go up or you die. There was no choice for us."

After the credits rolled and the audience stood up to cheer, Inarritu was joined on the Samuel Goldwyn Theatre stage at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences by star Leonardo DiCaprio and other members of his filmmaking team, who braved a brutal British Columbia winter to shoot the film this past year. He put the final touches on the film last week for its limited release on Dec. 25 followed by a nationwide expansion in January.

Set in 1823, The Revenant, based on a 2002 novel by Michael Punke, follows Hugh Glass (DiCaprio) and a team of fur trappers on an expedition cut short by a vicious ambush — the first scene that they shot. Soon after, Hugh is mauled by a bear and left for dead by his fellow frontiersman. He wills himself to survive and endeavours to enact revenge on those who have wronged him.

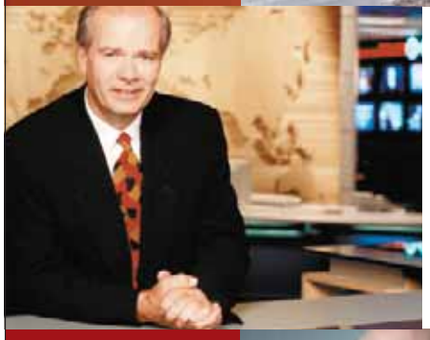
"This is a very linear, straightforward, brilliantly simplistic screenplay... we wanted to find the poetry in between that," DiCaprio said of his performance, which requires very little dialogue for a 151 minute movie. "It was about us immersing ourselves in nature and putting ourselves as close as we could to the struggle of these people and finding the through-line in that process."

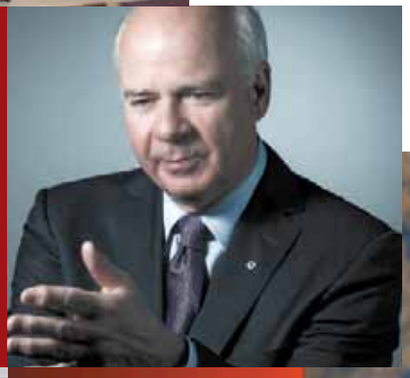
That immersion wasn't exactly a pleasant experience all of the time. Shooting The Revenant was a feat unlike that of any other film, with elaborate rehearsals and preparation months out only to have minutes to shoot on the day.

"It's all a beautiful blur to me," DiCaprio said, likening executing Inarritu's long shots to performing theatre every day. "You have to rehearse meticulously and then it's a mad, intense scramble to capture this magic light, this precious hour and a half."

The tension of getting the shot right translates into the movie and the performances, DiCaprio said and was a bonding element between the cast and crew.

"This is the most difficult film, I think, that any of us have ever done." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





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The National

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news

Nat Geo Wild about couchsurfing safari

TV SPECIAL

Settle into your easy chair for a live tour of game reserves

A cheetah during the Big Cat Games in Busch Gardens Tampa. NAT GEO WILD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As a chaser to the Thanksgiving feast and football, consider heading out on an African safari.

There's strictly armchair travel involved for Nat Geo Wild's live telecasts from Sabi Sands, a private game reserve in South Africa's Kruger National Park that's likely to dazzle even from a distance.

The no-sweat safaris, which begin Friday night, will offer "a real-time experience transporting viewers to a place they all want to go but may not have the opportunity," said Geoff Daniels, head of Nat Geo Wild.

"That we can beam audiences half a world away into the African bush is magical and stunning," said Daniels.

It's hard to fault his enthusiasm. Painstaking planning, skilful use of technology and helpful time zones will combine to bring one of Africa's largest game reserves, home to lions, leopards, elephants and more, to U.S. viewers.

Safaris typically are conducted at dawn, when the sun is coming up and animals are most active, and at dusk, Daniels said, making the telecasts relatively easy to schedule.

The excursions will air 11 p.m. to midnight EST Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with two-hour daytime specials at 9 a.m. EST daily from Saturday to Friday, Dec. 4.

"It's 100 per cent live," Daniels said. "We've got two safari vehicles going into the bush with microwave transmitters and cameras placed on the back of the jeeps."

The camera deployment will allow viewers to see everything they would if physically in the reserve, and in "full-blown HD" to boot, Daniels said. Drones will add overhead camera angles to add "a sense of the scale, scope and of action ... from a different perspective."

There's an online component as well, including the opportunity to ask questions via Twitter of the safari guides, who will respond during the telecasts, and an online bingo game with an actual safari as the prize.

Nat Geo, with producing partner Wild Earth, has been showing live safaris online for the past year and fine-tuning the process, Daniels said. They've attracted an enthusiastic following that includes shutterbugs taking photos of animals and sharing on social media.

Pieter Pretorius, a veteran guide who's handled the online safaris, says he's delighted with the expansion to TV.

"It's hugely exciting," he said by phone from Namibia, which borders South Africa. "We're opening up beautiful areas to potentially millions of people, and those people will form bonds with the environment because they're experiencing it in such a real way."

While Daniels calls the safaris the cherry on top of Big Cat Week, there are other notable programs.

The annual event kicks off with Cougars Undercover, 9 p.m. Friday, which showcases the Teton Cougar Project in Wyoming, a study by the wild cats conservation group Panthera.

As with the safaris, technology is key to Cougars Undercover. Sophisticated cameras provide access to the cats in a "non-invasive way," Daniels said, following two mountain lion moms and their cubs and documenting the cougar population's challenges.

Other Big Cat Week programs include The Lakeshore Killers, 9 p.m. EST Saturday, about a trio of male African lions coming of age, and The Ultimate Predator, 10 p.m. EST Sunday, a look at who rules among the dozens of cat species.

Nat Geo Wild's goal is to entertain and enlighten, Daniels said.

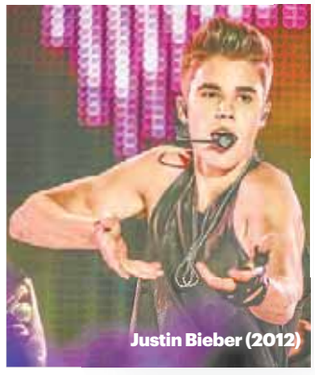
"It's our mission to deliver things like this (safari) experience ... and transport people into areas we really want them to care about," he said. "We're trying to get people to fall in love with animals and do a better job of taking care of them around the world." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A hyena family in a South African game reserve. PIETER PRETORIUS

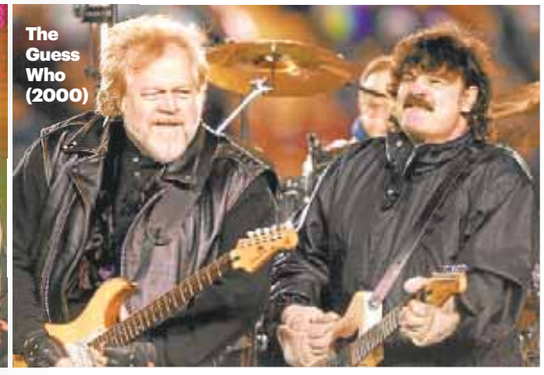
PUBLIC SPECTACLES

A history of Grey Cup halftime shows from Luba to Fall Out Boy

Alan Cross
For Metro Canada



Justin Bieber (2012)



The Guess Who (2000)

Black Eyed Peas (2005)

ALL PHOTOS THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sunday marks the 103rd edition of what some still call The Great National Drunk. And while the Grey Cup will always be dwarfed by the Super Bowl, we Canadians should remember that our game was into proper halftime spectacles before the NFL.

The first two dozen Super Bowl halftime shows featured little more than marching bands, over-produced thematic salutes (Hollywood, Mardi Gras, the cast of Peanuts) and insulin shock-inducing Up with People performers. It wasn't until 1993 that the league got serious, inviting Michael Jackson to perform at Super Bowl XVII.

The CFL had already discovered that the Grey Cup halftime worked better if the league presented more than some very smart dogs doing tricks.

The modern Grey Cup halftime show began in Winnipeg in 1991 when Luba — still very hot with songs like Let It Go — was brought in. This was the first Cup game to be held in Winnipeg, so organizers needed to prove that playing the game outdoors on the Prairies in November wasn't such a bad idea.

From then on, the Grey Cup halftime show became a much bigger priority. (There were a few duds like 1999's CFL Cheerleader Dance Routines, but never mind.)

In Toronto in 1992, it was Celine Dion. Vancouver brought in Tom Cochrane in 1994. The Guess Who entertained at McMahon Stadium in Calgary in 2000. Two years later in Edmonton, it was Shania Twain, followed by Bryan Adams and Sam Roberts (Regina, 2003) and the Tragically Hip (Ottawa, 2004).

Starting in 2005, organizers became open to hiring international acts, a controversial move given that the Grey Cup is supposed to be a quintessentially Canadian experience, but the Black Eyed Peas (Vancouver) did give the game an enhanced sense of prestige, as did Lenny Kravitz's performance in Toronto in 2007.

After that the pendulum swung back towards Canadian performers: Theory of a Deadman, Suzie McNeil and Andree Walters (2008), Blue Rodeo (2009) and Bachman & Turner (2010), Nickelback (2011), Justin Bieber, Carly Ray Jepson, Marianas Trench and, um, Gordon Lightfoot (2012) and Hedley (2013).

Now we seem to be into an international cycle again. Imagine Dragons brought down the house in B.C. last year. And despite the challenges of booking an international band on American Thanksgiving Weekend, Fall Out Boy will be at Investors Field in Winnipeg this Sunday.

ONE OTHER THING
The NFL doesn't pay its halftime performers a fee, saying that the exposure they get is enough. The CFL cuts a cheque every time.

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metro TRAVEL

Your essential daily news

Austria's Kitzbuehel named best ski resort of 2015 at World Ski Awards

A taste of the real Jamaica

SOUTH COAST

Go off the beaten track to explore the island's culinary side

Melissa Dunne
For Metro Canada

When most Canadians jet off to Jamaica they go straight from the airport to behind the gates of an all-inclusive resort.

Once behind the gates, people are usually served bad drinks with little umbrellas in them, reheated versions of the same food you can get back home and truly terrible stale coffee in the morning when you're nursing the hangover from all the umbrella drinks you drank the day before.

Aim higher. If you're going to stay behind the resort gates you might as well stay home and sip on cheap rum in your basement while watching the latest hockey game. Instead of heading to the crowded, kitschy resorts in Montego Bay and Kingston, get a taste of the real Jamaica by heading off the beaten (tourist) track.

Jake's Hotel in Treasure Beach, where staff can organize off-site adventures with local guides accompanying you, is a great option for those wanting to safely explore the Caribbean island.

Jake's is a bumpy two-and-a-half hours' drive from Sangster's International Airport in Montego Bay. It's well worth the commute. Contact the hotel to arrange a driver, for $134 US, one way, for up to a group of four. The boutique hotel is actually a collection of colourful cottages, ranging from small rooms with garden views starting at about $135 US (all prices not inclusive of taxes and service fees, for a minimum five-night stay) to a luxury villa with ocean views from $1,110 US per night during the high season (from Dec. 15 to April 15).

The salt-water pool at Jake's Hotel, where the water is pumped in straight from the bay. PHOTOS COURTESY MARY APESOS/FINN PARTNERS

Eat and drink local

Eat al fresco at Jake's with the sound of the salt-water crashing against the rocks in the background. The menu changes constantly, as it features local produce and seafood when it's in season. Be sure to try Jake's take on ackee and saltfish, Jamaica's national dish, for breakfast and pair it with a cup of famous Blue Mountain coffee.

To really get a sense of the St. Elizabeth Parish make sure to time your visit for the once-monthly farm-to-table event at Dool's Farm. The sunset dinner with the local farmer available to answer any questions is well worth the $95 US, plus taxes and tips. Most people in the rural, relaxed parish will gladly talk your ear off, so don't be shy to ask about the provenance and importance of their local food and drink.

The warm staff at Jake's can also help set up a boat tour, including a private feast with freshly caught lobster on a secluded beach, followed by a visit to Pelican Bar. The picturesque bar is actually a shack in the middle of the sea where you'll likely sip on a few Red Stripe beers and Appleton Estate rums mixed with ginger beer.

Rum is in the running to become the next bourbon, so there's no better place to get educated about the good stuff than by taking a day trip to partake in the Appleton Estate Rum Tour.

Once you've ventured beyond the resort gates in Jamaica you'll wonder why you stayed behind them for so long in the first place.

The writer was a guest of Jamaica Tourist Board, which did not review nor approve the story.

A lobster feast courtesy of One Love Boat Tours with captain Joseph Brown.

A traditional Jamaican breakfast at Jake's Hotel with fresh, locally grown ingredients.

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Curaçao
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St. Maarten
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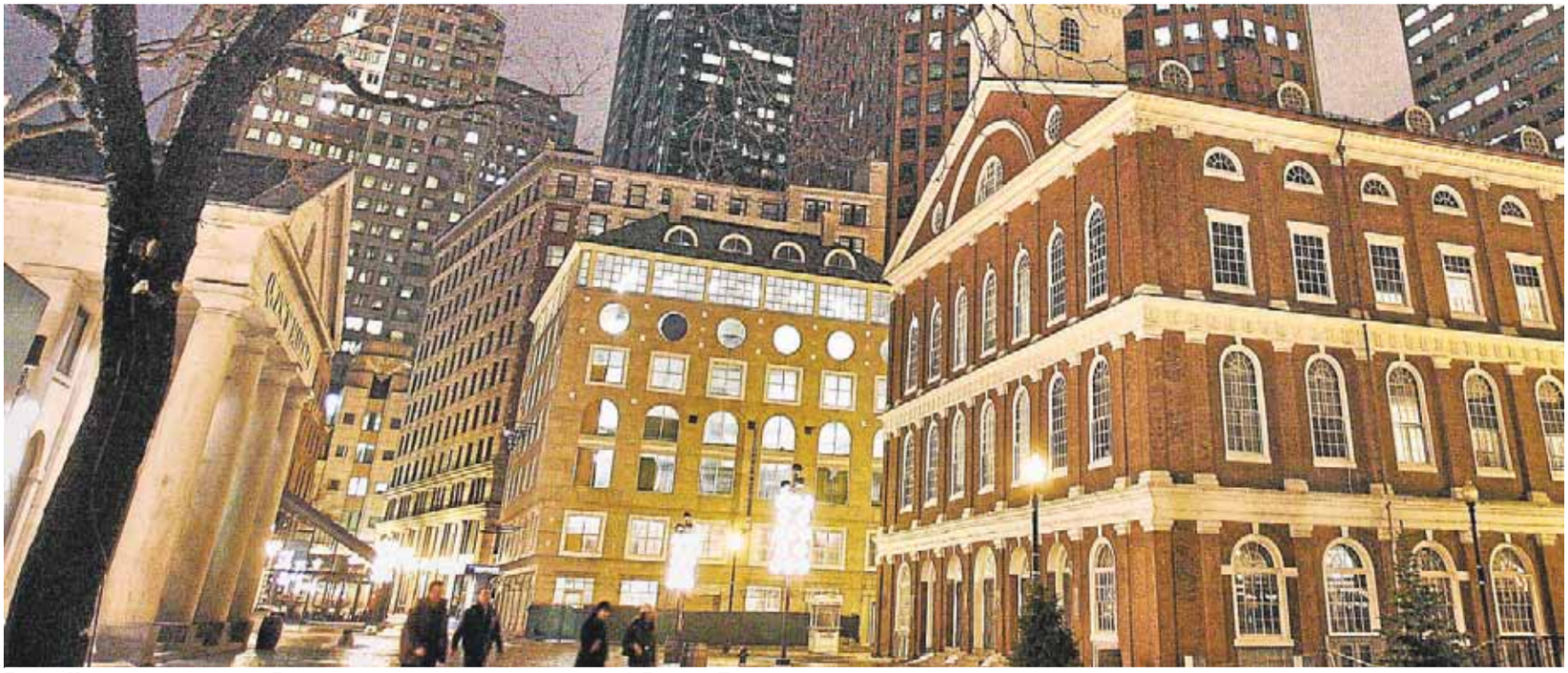

Faneuil Hall, at left, in downtown Boston is one of the historic sites on the city's Freedom Trail. MICHAEL DWYER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

What's wicked cool and new in Boston

MASSACHUSETTS

Indoor coral reef, marathon lore — and don't forget Fenway

No bucket list is complete without at least one trip to Boston, a city that's forever coming up with new ways to entice visitors to return. Sure, there's always Fenway Park, the Freedom Trail and those zany duck boat tours. But while you were away, the Cradle of Liberty sprouted some wicked cool new stuff. Here's your guide to Beantown, both on and off the beaten path:

What's new

If you're a runner or a history buff, or both, you'll be hot to trot for RunBase.

Part interactive museum, clubhouse and retail outlet, RunBase opened last spring near the finish line of the iconic Boston Marathon.

It's a great place to find someone to share a run along the nearby Charles River, or simply to learn more about the rich lore of the 119-year-old marathon, America's most storied footrace.

Across town on the harbour, check out the renovated giant ocean tank at the New England Aquarium. It got a $17.8-million remake in 2013, and 52 viewing bays now look out on a coral reef teeming with more than 1,000 fish species.

Unleash your inner Cousteau beneath the new reflective ceiling dome, which gives the entire aquarium a shimmering undersea vibe. If you're visiting with kids, this is a must-see.

Need some fresh air? Stroll the Rose Kennedy Greenway, one of the nation's premier showcases for unusual open-air art installations. There's abstract sculpture, a labyrinth and more.

Coming in spring 2016: the Boston Wax Museum. This won't be just another Madame Tussauds; Brazil-based Dreams Entertainment Group says its U.S. debut venture will feature wax likenesses of influential Bostonians through the ages in politics, sports and entertainment.

Classic attractions

Non-negotiables: lunch and shopping at Faneuil Hall Marketplace in the heart of downtown, where Samuel Adams and other patriots agitated for rebellion against the British. Ditto a leisurely walk through Boston Common and the adjacent Boston Public Garden, the heart and lungs of the city.

You can't truthfully say you've done Boston without following the Freedom Trail, a 2.5-mile route that takes in Old North Church, Paul Revere House, Bunker Hill Monument and a dozen other colonial sites. A raucous alternative is a splashy ride on a duck boat: a Second World War-style amphibious vehicle that rumbles past most of those landmarks.

Other must-sees: the highly interactive John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, devoted to the 35th president and Massachusetts' most favourite son. Or, if high-end retail therapy is your thing, the fashionable salons and boutiques of Newbury Street.

For heaven's sake, don't go home without genuflecting before Fenway Park, a shrine which deserves a visit even if the Red Sox inside aren't always worthy. Catch a game in season and consider an hour-long walking tour and a selfie atop the ballpark's signature Big Green Monster wall.

By now, you'll be ravenous. Head to the North End, a warren of narrow streets lined with Italian restaurants. Slake your thirst with a tour of the Samuel Adams Brewery.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TIPS

- **Pack an umbrella**: Boston's weather is famously unpredictable. If you're planning to visit in winter, keep in mind that February tends to be the region's snowiest month.
- Taxis can be expensive and elusive. If you're not into Uber or other ride-sharing services, **MBTA public transit** — known simply as the T — will get you virtually everywhere, and it's much cheaper. You can buy reloadable CharlieTicket and CharlieCard passes and save a bundle.

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‘Rocky’ effect put Philly on world map

PENNSYLVANIA

Plenty of love for movie saga in resurgent city

It is a classic slice of pop history: Sylvester Stallone — a.k.a. “Rocky” — jogging up the steps of the art museum in Philadelphia.

For four decades, the boxing saga whose latest chapter hit U.S. screens Wednesday, helped put Philly on the map.

The 72 “Rocky Steps” — as they are known — are an irresistible draw to tourists who come to mimic the iconic scene from the Oscar-winning 1976 movie about an aspirational boxer named Rocky Balboa.

“The Rocky movie series has been an incredible part of the history and the legacy of the city Philadelphia,” Mayor Michael Nutter told AFP. “I mean this has been going on for 30 years now. It’s a part of us and we are a part of it.”

At the foot of the famed steps towers a 10-foot bronze statue of Rocky, commissioned by the saga’s star and creator Stallone for Rocky III and donated to the city after the shoot.

On a crisp fall day, Agga Dharma, a Buddhist monk newly arrived from Myanmar, waits in turn with a dozen tourists to snap a selfie beside it. Yes, he says, Rocky is a phenomenon in his native Burma too.

The statue is Philly’s most asked-about landmark behind the Liberty Bell, a symbol of the birth of the United States, says Anne McGuigan, a volunteer at the tourist office.

Visitors can pick up Rocky-themed maps guiding them to the steps and statue, but also a dozen locations from the Italian market, home to Esposito’s Butcher shop, to Pat’s King of Steaks — the Philly cheesesteak sandwich spot — or the Penn’s landing waterfront.

“The Rocky movie series,” says Nutter, “put Philadelphia on the international map. For that, we’re very proud and very grateful.”

Now Creed is hitting screens just in time for U.S. Thanksgiving. The saga’s seventh instalment sees Stallone return as the veteran Balboa, called out of retirement to mentor the son of a late friend and boxing rival.

Restored pride

Rocky’s popularity is not universal in Philly. Some here see the franchise, already spun out across five sequels and a Broadway musical, as having run its course long ago.

“Some people like it, some people don’t,” said Jordan Morinich, an employee at Esposito’s, of the phenomenon. “All the shops used to have a picture of him inside. We never had one. I don’t think it changes anything for business.”

The Rocky statue was originally located at the top of the famous steps, but had to be moved after locals complained it was inappropriate outside a museum.

But in Pennsylvania’s largest city, Rocky still gets a lot of love.

“When it first came out, it restored pride to the city,” said Vince Giaccobi, who grew up in Philadelphia. “In the ’70s and ’80s, the city wasn’t where it needed to be,” he said, referring to its reputation as a blue-collar, struggling town.

These days, it is a city on the move, something of a boom town. Largely neglected for decades, its downtown has been revitalized, and bristles with new restaurants, bars and construction projects.

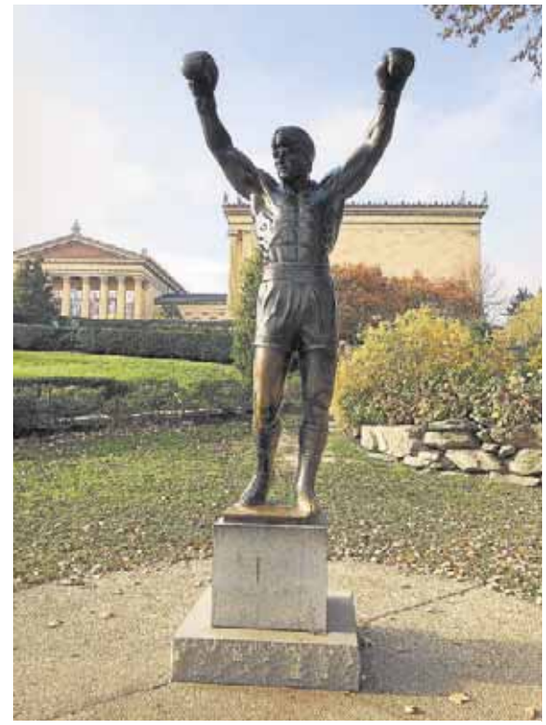
Poverty remains a concern, with a citywide level among the 10 highest in the country. But economic growth is solid.

“It’s changed a lot. Now it’s more culturally oriented. I think it’s for the better,” Giacobbi said.

Craig Schelter, executive director at the city’s Development Workshop, which acts as a bridge between government and the private sector, says tax benefits in 1997 were critical to the downtown rebirth.

Developers began investing massively and by 2008, cable giant Comcast was moving into its new headquarters there. Big growth at the city’s big three universities — Penn, Drexel and Temple — also has been a driving factor, according to Schelter. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

“Every time Rocky comes out, I get 50 kids in the gym.... With this opening up, it’s going to be packed again. Frank Kubach, whose Front Street Gym was used to shoot Creed



The 10-foot Rocky Balboa statue in front of the Museum of Art in Philadelphia. THOMAS URBAIN/AFP

TRAVEL NOTES ASIAN ADVENTURE, AFFORDABLE LUXURY

Myanmar magic
Trafalgar travel company has added Myanmar to its Hidden Journeys list of tours for next year, offering an off-the-beaten-path 11-day guided experience through Yangon, Bagan, Monywa and Mandalay. Take part in the oil lamp ceremony at the Shwedagon Temple at sunset, have lunch in the home of a Bagan family and commune with fisherman on Inle Lake. Visit Trafalgar.com.

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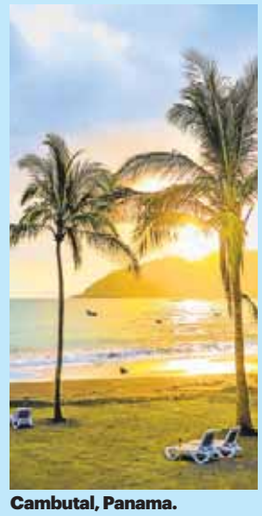
Yoga sanctuary
Smart health and wellness companies Healistiq and So Fresh Nutrition are co-hosting a Surf, Sun & Serenity Yoga Retreat Feb. 7 to 13 at the Sansara Resort in Cambutal, Panama. Renovate mind and body with yoga, hiking, surfing, fishing, cycling — and eating healthily — in this secluded tropical beach town five hours from Panama. Visit HealistiqEvents.com/retreats.
DOUG WALLACE

Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangoon. RALF-ANDRE LETTAU

Loisium Wine & Spa Resort, Austria. CONTRIBUTED



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Don't let the loonie clip your travel wings

ON THE MOVE

Look at other sun spots when the dollar is weak

Loren Christie
For Metro Canada

The falling loonie has not only put a strain on the wallets of travellers heading to the United States but on sun seekers faced with rising prices from tour operators who do their contracting in U.S. dollars. But there are ways you can still take a winter holiday without breaking the bank.

Book now

Canadian travel companies have jumped on board the Cyber Monday shopping craze, making early next week the time to find some great deals. Starting Monday, Cheapflights.ca's 12 Days of Travel will feature one deal per day. These daily deals will cover budgets for every level and range from savings on Caribbean cruises, to discounted airfares on airlines like WestJet and Air Canada, to major discounts on hotel stays in Cuba and Dominican Republic. Transat.ca is celebrating Cyber Monday with a one-day auction on Twitter to benefit SOS Children's Villages. Twenty lots comprising sun packages to destinations like Mexico, Curacao and St. Maarten and roundtrip flights to Europe from 11 cities will be up for grabs.

Consider off-season travel

According to a recent Travelzoo.ca survey more Canadians (73 per cent) are opting for off-season vacations to save on costs. Although it may mean for a longer winter, beach bums should head south after Easter when prices start to drop. Travelling to Europe in the off-season is a great alternative for Canadians. Not only is the euro experiencing its own decline but there are deals to be had during the winter months. As an added bonus Canadians travelling to the "old world" in winter will experience smaller crowds than during the summer.

> **Travelling to Europe in the off-season is a great alternative for Canadians.**

Seek out alternative (and better value) destinations

Skip the all-inclusive to Jamaica and head to spots in Central and South America like Panama and Ecuador, which are growing in popularity. According to online travel company FlightHub, Asia has seen a spike in popularity this winter with destinations like the Philippines and Thailand taking over the top ranking from the typical favourites Orlando and Las Vegas. Yes the flights to Asia are not cheap, but once you are on the ground you will get a much better bang for your Canadian buck.

Compare exchange rates

Consider getting local currency of the country you are travelling in versus bringing U.S. cash. It likely will yield you a better rate. Most major airports in the world have a bank machine making access to local currency easy when you first land.

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$555
+ $455 taxes (SGN)

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Sunscape Curacao Resort Spa & Casino ****
Dec 13, 2015
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All Inclusive
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$1035
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Farmers' market a mosaic of Halifax

SEAPORT

15,000 people come through on any given weekend

A walk through the aisles of the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market is an experience that's quintessentially Nova Scotian.

As thousands of the port city's residents and visitors stroll slowly through the rows of stalls on a Saturday morning, they pass piles of fresh produce, locally made cheeses, glistening seafood and handmade crafts, savouring the rich smells and bright colours before winding up the morning with some live music outside.

Mary Ann LaPierre of Hillcrest Farm, whose family has been selling produce at the market every Saturday since the late 1800s, says it's a perfect introduction to the province.

"(You get to) see the people of Nova Scotia, see what's growing here and how we live."

Established in 1750, a year after Halifax itself was founded, the market is the oldest continuously operating farmers' market in North America.

"It's still basically the same, selling one-on-one to customers, but it's changed quite a bit," said LaPierre.

Over the years, the market's location has changed a few times, but it finally found a permanent home in a vast and airy new building in the Seaport on the city's waterfront in 2010.

The 46,672-square-foot facility now hosts more than 250 vendors from 50 countries.

Julie Chaisson, executive director of the market, says it reflects the diversity of Halifax and Canada as a whole.

"When you walk through a market, you see the true character of the city," she says. "It's a really great mosaic for the heart of that city."

On any given weekend, Chaisson says 15,000 people come through the market, which has grown from its origins as a meat market to a bustling showcase of everything from locally made sushi to Polish perogies to custom-made handbags.

"Anything you can make, bake, grow or catch," says Chaisson.

IF YOU GO

Take a stroll through the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. It's next door to the market.

The Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market features locally grown foods, a wide variety of beverages and a range of crafts.
ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In the early years, heading down to the market became a way of life for many farmers. As well as a place of business, the market offered an opportunity to reconnect with friends and catch up on the news of the week.

People would travel up to 65 kilometres each way, often by horse and wagon, to sell their goods.

LaPierre remembers her 90-minute-long rides fondly.

"I was small," she says. "We used to drive the old truck. If we got 30 miles an hour out of it, we were lucky."

"That's what took us so long."

Back then, whichever farmer arrived first got the best spot, which meant LaPierre and her family had to leave early.

Some of LaPierre's favourite memories from the market are the people she's met, from her weekly regulars to some big-time celebrities.

"I met Prince Charles here and I met Roberta Bondar, the first Canadian lady in space."

The market is part of the Halifax Seaport, which is where the cruise ships dock and is also home to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

"A lot of the cruise ship people come in and they're quite surprised to see all the things we have here in Nova Scotia," says LaPierre.

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Secret Santa: The perfect gift for a stranger

GIVING GUIDANCE

Make your gift a memorable one, no matter who you're buying for

Astrid Van Den Broek

You've pulled Sandra's name from payroll for the office Secret Santa gift exchange. Who's Sandra again? And what do you get this total stranger?

Whether you loathe or love a Secret Santa exchange, there are ways to make your gift a memorable one. (No need to resort to gift cards!)

Here's what you can do.

CONSIDER YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Is this an office Secret Santa? A church? A family gathering? "A gag gift might be perfect for the family but could be disastrous at work," notes Marie Anakee Miczak, the New York-based blogger behind gavethat.com. If you do opt for a gift card, make it one of the more unique ones rather than just a usual coffee card.

"They can be ones for fun experiences or an unexpected treat such as a movie out with friends," Miczak adds.

> **A gag gift might be perfect for the family but could be disastrous at work.**
> Marie Anakee Miczak, the New York-based blogger behind gavethat.com

THINK ABOUT YOURSELF

As in…what types of gifts do you like to receive but never get?

"If you do that, even if you don't know them well, it's a safe bet that the recipient doesn't already have it — so think about something luxe such as cashmere socks, a high-end candle or letter press coasters," says Lindsay Roberts Schey, founder of the blog TheGiftInsider.com.

GO EDIBLE

Who doesn't like to eat? "On-trend edibles are always a great option," says Roberts Schey. "So macaroons, hot chocolate stirrers and gourmet popcorn are a hit this year."

"Gifts that are great are something that you love — like a favourite organic tea or honey or favourite handmade local chocolate," says Lisa Pozin, the Vancouver-based owner of Giving Gifts.

DOS…

If you know the person and their interests, start there says Roberts Schey.

"So for a yoga lover, you could try an insulated water bottle and an athletic headband. Or for a coffee drinker, a calligraphy mug." Roberts Schey also gives the thumbs up to give holiday-related items such as candles, ornaments and home decor items.

…AND DON'TS!

However avoid buying clothes or items people have to wear daily. "If they're a co-worker or close friend and they don't love the item, you don't want them feeling guilty every day they don't wear it around you."

And if you don't know the person well, opt for a more gender neutral low-key item. "Don't buy something that is over-the-top or a crazy colour or way out there," says Pozin. "

Try to be modest and neutral with your gift so that it really will appeal to anyone that gets it, not just the person that you think might get it."

Also, Roberts Schey adds, don't go over the price limit. "It just makes people feel uncomfortable and takes away all the fun."

And don't regift! While regifting is a little more acceptable these days, you're taking chances doing it in the Secret Santa office pool.

"If you have bad luck, the person that gave it to you will notice and you'll be embarrassed for the next year," says Pozin.

NEED MORE IDEAS FOR YOUR SECRET SANTA?

Gift ideas under $20

1 4-pack striped whiskey glasses, $12.96, Walmart.
2 The Original Chicken Bones 300g Gift Box $10, available at major retailers including Loblaws, Walmart and Shopper's Drug Mart.
3 Anna Karenina: A Colouring Book Love Story, $16, and Double-Sided Colouring Pencils, $12.50, Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.
4 Canadiana Cookie Cutters, $8.47, Walmart.
5 Circus Finger Puppets, $19.50, Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.
6 Bison Bracelet, $14, Sporting Life, sportinglife.ca.

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The most techie time of the year

FROM LAPTOPS TO TABLETS

Maximize those holiday deals to start 2016 in style

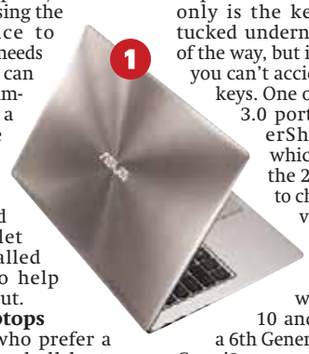
Marc Saltzman

Good news for those putting off the inevitable computer upgrade: there's never been a better time to buy one.

Between Black Friday sales, pre-holiday bargains and Boxing Week, retailers are looking to clear out their inventory to make way for 2016 models.

Not only can you take advantage of falling prices, but there are many brands to choose from, along with varying form factors, screen sizes and specifications ("specs").

But choosing the right device to match your needs and budget can be overwhelming. Here's a look at some recommended laptops, tablets and laptop-tablet hybrids, called "2-in-1s" to help you out.



Laptops

For those who prefer a classic clamshell laptop design with a large screen, full-sized keyboard, and multiple ports.

• If budget is limited, consider the blue HP Stream ($299), a 13.3-inch laptop powered by an Intel Celeron N3050 (1.6GHz) processor, 2 gigabytes of system memory (RAM) and 32-gigabytes of SSD flash memory – which is more durable, lighter and better on battery life than a hard drive. This Windows 10 PC also houses two USB 3.0 ports, a memory card reader, and DTS Sound+ with dual speakers.

• Thin is in with the ASUS Zenbook UX305 ($899), a slender 13.3-inch computer that's only 0.5-inches thick and weighs just 2.6 pounds. Under the hood is an Intel Core M-5Y10 processor. This laptop also benefits from 8 gigabytes of system memory, and 256 gigabytes of SSD storage. A Best Buy exclusive, this gold-coloured laptop ships with Windows 8.1, but can be upgraded to Windows 10 for free.

2-in-1s

As the name suggests, 2-in-1s are both a laptop and tablet in one device. These versatile PCs include a keyboard and trackpad for when you need to get work done, but they also let you use your fingertip to tap, swipe and flick on a multi-touch display.

• The Dell Inspiron 15 7000 Series 2-in-1 ($829.99) features a large 15.6-inch LED-backlit screen on a hinge, so it can be flipped back 360-degrees to put it in tablet mode. Not only is the keyboard now tucked underneath and out of the way, but it's disabled so you can't accidentally press keys. One of the two USB 3.0 ports has a PowerShare feature, which lets you use the 2-in-1's battery to charge other devices, like your smartphone. This Dell is equipped with Windows 10 and powered by a 6th Generation Intel Core i3 processor.

• Give the best of both worlds with the ASUS Transformer Book T100 ($299.99). This 10.1-inch computer has a QWERTY keyboard and trackpad for typing up an essay or sales report, but when it's time to kick back and relax on the couch – perhaps to read an ebook, watch a video, play a game or browse the web – simply detach the touch-screen and use it with your fingertips. Together, this screen and keyboard weighs just 1.2 pounds. Battery life tops 11 hours between charges.

Tablets

Smaller, lighter, and thinner, a touchscreen tablet also offers better battery life than a laptop.

• From $439, Apple's iPad mini 4 has a stunning 7.9-inch Retina display, a powerful A8 chip for fast performance, dual cameras, a Touch ID fingerprint sensor for convenient authorization, and the new iOS 9 operating system supports multi-tasking for iPad (be it split-screen or picture-in-picture). The App Store is a convenient way to access high-quality and inexpensive apps. A cellular option takes a SIM card for Internet access without requiring a Wi-Fi hotspot.

• If the popular Android platform is more your thing, Samsung's Galaxy Tab S2 (from $499.99 for 8-inch version) is the tech giant's flagship tablet. With it's ultra-realistic screen, blazing octo-core processor and ample storage options, the Galaxy Tab S2 might just be your go-to companion for work and play. Also sold as a 9.7-inch model (from $599.99), the Galaxy Tab S2 is available with 4G/LTE connectivity.

• For those who demand desktop-like performance, a full Windows experience, and PC-like ports such as USB and microSD, Microsoft's Surface Pro 4 (from $1,179) is garnering quite a buzz among mobile professionals.

Microsoft's 4th generation product is a powerful, 12.3-inch Windows 10 Pro tablet that supports multiple magnetic covers with an integrated keyboard and trackpad. Like previous models, there's also a multi-angle kickstand in the back to prop up the tablet.

1 ASUS Zenbook UX305 laptop computer ($899)
2 Dell Inspiron 15 7000 Series 2-in-1 ($829.99)
3 Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 (from $499.99 for 8-inch version)
4 Apple iPad Mini 7.9-inch Retina display (From $439)

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Newest gadget gifts for kids

Marc Saltzman

Nothing says "happy holidays" to the gadget lover more than a new tech toy tied up in a bow.

To simplify your shopping, we've hand-selected the top tech items and accessories for kids, tweens and teens ranging from $77 to $539.

Don't worry; we won't tell if you decide to stick one under the tree for yourself.

I'm with the band

Even if you're not a fan of the game Minecraft, you know someone who is. Downloaded more than 21 million times, the hit indie game was bought by Microsoft for $2.5 billion late last year — and now it's playable on your wrist.

Called Gameband + Minecraft ($99.99), this USB bracelet with integrated memory holds the game inside, so all gamers on the go need to do is plug it into a PC and play it off the device itself — access to all your worlds, maps, texture packs and saved data is included. This is especially ideal for kids who don't have their own computer, as it allows them to plug and play without installing the software on other computers. And yes, it tells time, too.

Look ma, no hands!

Electric skateboards are one of the hottest tech toys of the year, but beware the many copycat brands out there with cheap materials and low-grade batteries. Instead, the Swagway X1 ($539.99) is a high-quality, zero-emission, self-balancing electric skateboard that only uses Samsung and LG batteries. Go forwards and backwards up to 16 kilometres per hour by simply leaning in a given direction. Steering and stopping are equally easy thanks to its internal gyroscope and acceleration sensors that react based on your centre of gravity (blue LED lights flash to indicate which direction you're turning). Available in red, dark red, white, blue, green, black or pink.

2

It's epic

Designed for kids age three to nine, the LeapFrog Epic ($169.99) is a 7-inch Android-based tablet with a number of exclusive features: a first-of-its-kind playable home screen with daily surprises to tap on; preloaded educator-approved content, such as games, activities and ebooks; and access to the LeapFrog Store for more than a thousand downloads and none with in-app purchases or third-party ads.

A LeapSearch Browser offers a protected online environment with curated websites, games and videos for your child. Parents can also set time limits and manage content. And if and when the child is ready, mom and dad can unlock access to the Amazon Appstore and a full web browser.

3

Sound advice

As the name suggests, the Kidz Gear Bluetooth Stereo Headphones ($77.99) are wireless headphones that can be paired with any Bluetooth-enabled music player, such as a smartwatch, smartphone, iPod touch, touchscreen tablet or laptop.

Available in multiple colours, the headphones include a patented removable omni-directional boom microphone, ideal for chatting online while playing computer games or for using apps that teach language (such as Duolingo). The headphones charge up through a bundled USB cable. A non-wireless version sells for $49.99 with a boom mic or $39.99 without.

1

May the droid be with you

You might've heard about a little 'ol movie sequel coming out in December — Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens — and with it will come some pretty cool merchandising.

One that's garnering a lot of buzz is Sphero's BB-8 ($189.95), an app-enabled Droid that recognizes your voice, responds to your commands, displays a variety of expressions and can patrol its surroundings autonomously. BB-8 also allows kids (er, or kids at heart) to record and check out cool virtual holographic videos. The rechargeable lithium polymer battery allows for one hour of drive time.

On a related note, kids who'd prefer a flying drone with integrated camera might opt for the Parrot MiniDrone Airborne Cargo ($139.99) or MiniDrone Airborne Night ($179.99).

The whole tooth

Before you roll your eyes about gifting a toothbrush, consider the Oral-B SmartSeries 5000 Power Toothbrush with Bluetooth ($199.99) — get it, blue "tooth"? — sends information on your brushing to a nearby app, such as how long you're brushing, which quadrant you might be neglecting in your mouth (like upper right) and if you're applying too much pressure or not.

The free app for mobile devices can also show you additional info, if desired, such as news headlines and weather info to read while you're brushing. Of course, it's also a stellar electric toothbrush that delivers 40,000 pulsations and 8,800 oscillations per minute with different cleaning modes.

4

5

1 Kidz Gear Bluetooth Stereo Headphones, $77.99, amazon.ca
2 Oral-B SmartSeries 5000 Power Toothbrush with Bluetooth, $199.99, londondrugs.com
3 LeapFrog Epic, $169.99, leapfrog.ca
4 Sphero's BB-8, $189.95, chapters.indigo.ca
5 Swagway X1, $539.99, staples.ca

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STEP INTO ANOTHER WORLD

Fine-tune your holiday decor

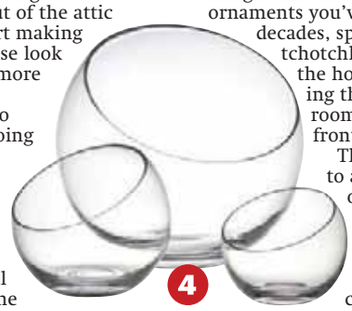
Andrea Janus

The holidays are almost upon us, and it's about that time to drag the decorations out of the attic and start making the house look a little more festive.

But to avoid going full-on Clark Griswold with lights that will strain the local power station and more kitschy bric-a-brac than a dollar store, consider these tips from interior designer William MacDonald of WillMac Design.

First things first. "Don't go overboard," he says. "If you think you have too much, you do."

Many people make the mistake of overloading one room: piling up the sideboard, mantelpiece and end tables with decorations.



"Spread the love around the house," MacDonald advises. Even if you're decorating from the same box of ornaments you've had for decades, spread those tchotchkes around the house, including the powder room or the front hall.

The best way to avoid going overboard, though, is to pick a theme, which could be a motif (snowflakes or reindeer) or a colour, then build your decor around that.

Look for inspiration anywhere, even months before Christmas on your summer holiday.

MacDonald found a starfish on the East Coast one year, and the following Christmas the star was his holiday motif. Once you decide on a theme, it isn't necessary to spend a lot of money, MacDonald says. A local park or wooded area, and even the grocery store, are great places to start.

Filling large decorative bowls, or even large serving bowls or soup terrines, with seasonal fruits (pomegranates or clementines, for example), nuts, or pine cones and branches that you've sprayed with silver or gold paint is an easy way to get a cozy seasonal look without breaking the bank.

"I'm a strong believer in going to your fridge first," MacDonald says.

Otherwise, invest in a good-quality artificial garland to keep in your holiday kit that you can use year after year. Drape it over the mantel, along a staircase or down the middle of your holiday table.

Every year you can accessorize it differently based on your chosen theme, MacDonald says.

Party Prep

Once the house is decorated and you're ready to entertain, MacDonald advises bringing in some key items that you will likely reuse throughout the year.

A bar cart will always come in handy during the holidays for smaller parties, and makes for easy entertaining year-round.

But for a larger guest list, use a sideboard or rent a large table and set out all the fixings, MacDonald recommends.

And always be prepared for surprise visitors by having a low-sided basket full of nuts, candies and cocktail napkins underneath or inside the coffee table.

When friends pop by unexpectedly for a holiday libation, "You just bring that up and put it in on the coffee table and say, 'let me get you a glass of wine,'" MacDonald says.

"Just like you were expecting them to pop by." And always have another basket of toiletries and a set of towels and linens ready for visitors who may not be ready to leave until the next morning.

1 Gold berry wreath, $29, Walmart, walmart.ca.
2 Gold and ivory animal silhouette pillow, $39.50, Indigo stores, chapters.indigo.ca.
3 Washed jewel tone votive cup, $19 each, Pottery Barn, potterybarn.com.
4 Tilt bowls, sml: $14.96, med: $16.95 and lrg: $69.95, Crate and Barrel, crateandbarrel.com.tery Barn, potterybarn.com.
5 Barware set, $19.96, Walmart, walmart.ca. Terrace bar cart, $479, West Elm, westelm.com.
6 Terrace bar cart, $479, West Elm, westelm.com.
7 Red berry garland, $69.95, Crate and Barrel, crateandbarrel.com.
8 Wood reindeer vase, tall, $39.95, Indigo stores, chapters.indigo.ca.

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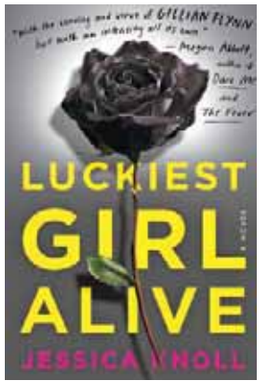
The book on the best reads

Tanya Enberg

From humorous memoirs and edge-of-your seat thrillers to must-read young-adult fiction and slumber-themed stories, some of the best books of 2015 can make the perfect gift for every type of reader on your list.

Adults

Among the Ten Thousand Things
Julia Pierpont, $31
Random House
A husband's scorned ex-mistress sends a large box of X-rated emails exchanged between the two to his wife. When the couple's 11-year-old daughter Kay opens the package first and shares the contents with her older brother, the emotional tone is set in the early pages of Julia Pierpont's novel, as domestic life begins a fast downward spiral to crack the family's façade of happiness.

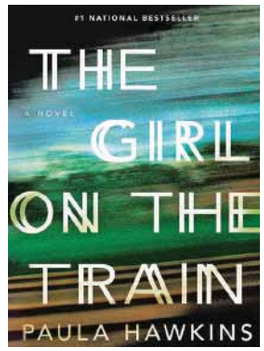


Luckiest Girl Alive
Jessica Knoll, $32.99
Simon
& Schuster Canada
Nothing is what it seems in this buzzing crime novel. Ani is a 20-something that appears to have it all — a prestigious magazine editor job and a blue-blood fiancé — except that she doesn't. Ani's identity is a complete fabrication. After enduring various traumas growing up, she designed the perfectly coiffed, multi-level alias to try and bury her true identity. Trouble is, some demons may prove too persistent to keep secret.

In the Unlikely Event
Judy Blume, $34
Doubleday Canada
Breaking from the tradition of penning addictive books for young girls, Judy Blume's recent novel was written for adults and inspired by tragic real-life occurrences. In Blume's hometown of Elizabeth, N.J., where the novel is based, three commercial passenger planes crashed occur within two months while the author was in grade school. These disasters serve as the backdrop in a blend of fact and fiction told through multiple characters, with 15-year-old Miri Ammerman at the heart of it.

The Kaufmann Mercantile Guide: How to Split Wood, Shuck an Oyster, and Master other Simple Pleasures
Alexandra Redgrave
Jessica Hundley and Sebastian Kaufmann, $33.95
Princeton Architectural Press
Make space on the coffee table for this comprehensive and quirky hardcover guidebook to mastering simple tasks and pleasures inside and outside the home. From brewing that all-important perfect cup of coffee and fixing a flat bike tire to creating urban composts and properly splitting wood, this smart hardcover guide shows readers how to get the job done right, with easy-to-follow instructions and simple illustrations.

Why Not Me?
Mindy Kaling, $32
Penguin Random House
Funny-smart gal Mindy Kaling, star and creator of The Mindy Project, offers insight and humour in this collection of personal essays chronicling her ongoing journey toward achieving grown-up satisfaction.



The Girl on the Train
Paula Hawkins, $24.95
Doubleday Canada
Daily commutes will never be the same. Taking readers to the edge of their seats with unexpected twists and turns, this suspenseful, psychological thriller moves beyond traditional whodunit narratives and digs into ugly grit of human frailties, revealing infidelity, addiction and the suspenseful search for a ruthless killer.

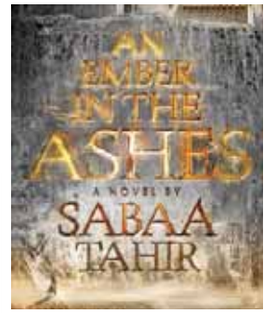
Finders Keepers
Stephen King, $39.99
Simon & Schuster Canada,
A familiar theme returns in this thrilling sequel to Mr. Mercedes. Here, a reader's obsession with an author turns sinister. Recalling King's 1987 novel Misery, in which a deranged fan forces her idol to keep writing by cutting off various body parts, this suspenseful novel is about reclusive fictional writer John Rothstein, who is shot in the head and has his notebooks stolen by his own psychotic number one fan.

Boys in Trees: A Memoir
Carly Simon, $33.50
Flatiron Books
Music fans will appreciate this revealing memoir by legendary singer-songwriter Carly Simon. Simon recalls her creative childhood and revisits her folk-artist music debut in Greenwich Village with sister Lucy (performing as The Simon Sisters), her meteoric rise to international stardom, and her famous romantic entanglements.

Teens

Carry On
Rainbow Rowell, $22.99
St. Martin's Press
From the New York Times' bestselling author of Eleanor and Park comes a re-entry into the YA mind. The attempts of protagonist Simon Snow to slip under the radar during his final year at elite Watford School of Magicks prove futile in this imaginative story involving a magic-eating monster, ghosts, drama, mystery and love, of course.

P.S. I Still Love You
Jenny Han, $22.99
Simon & Schuster Canada
After the New York Times' bestselling To All The Boys I've Loved Before, Lara Jean returns in the sequel and finds that she's unexpectedly falling for Peter. When a past romance returns, Lara is more confused than ever when it comes to matters of the heart.



An Ember in the Ashes
Sabaa Tahir, $23.95
Razorbill (Penguin Random House)
The cruelty of class systems is explored in Sabaa Tahir's thought-provoking novel. The Scholars are laden with fear, sadness and desperation. They barely earn enough to survive and live under constant fear of imprisonment and the threat of vanishing without a trace, trying to survive in an empire existing under the barbaric rule of the Marshals.

The Story of Owen: Dragon Slayer of Trondheim
E.K. Johnston, $22.95
Carolrhoda Books
Imaginations are stirred in this epic fantasy that tells the tale of high school students Siobhan McQuaid and Owen Thorskard, living in a rural Ontario town and facing rising daily threats of dragon attacks. Owen hails from a long line of dragon slayers in this inventive tale, where these fire-breathing beasts can only be defeated by sword to their double hearts.

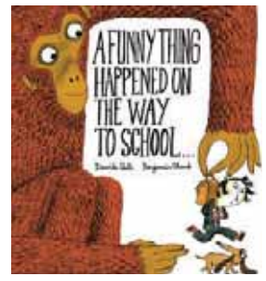
Mosquitoland
David Arnold, $13.99
Viking Books for Young Readers
A funny and heartwarming debut novel by David Arnold tells the story of 16-year-old runaway Mim, who has stolen cash to travel via Greyhound bus from Mississippi, where she's living with her dad and stepmom after her parents divorce, to Ohio to get to her mom. During this memorable, eye-opening road trip, Mim crosses paths with an eclectic spree of characters, learning insights into her own inner journey as she goes.

The Gameknight999 Box Set: Six Unofficial Minecrafter's Adventures!
Mark Cheverton, $35
Sky Pony Press
Six action-packed adventure novels are combined in one handy box set that will thrill fans of the game Minecraft. When player Gameknight999 is accidentally transported into the game's dangerous digital world, he is forced to go to battle against an onslaught of enemies, zombies, spiders and creepers among them, to try and keep himself and his friends alive.

Children

What Pet Should I Get?
Dr. Seuss, $21
Random House Books for Young Readers
Full of catchy rhymes and playful illustrations, What Pet Should I Get? allows fans to revisit the absolute brilliance of the late Dr. Seuss with a new book. Published posthumously and likely written between 1958 and 1962, the story follows the tale of two siblings as they waffle and waver over the very best pet to bring home. In the end, it's up to reader's imagination to decide.

Pete the Cat's Groovy Guide to Life
James Dean, $15.99
HarperCollins Canada
Another imaginative tale featuring everyone's favourite cat is sure to delight. The sassy, ever-optimistic Pete shares wise and inspirational quotes by famous people, with everyone from Shakespeare and Confucius to Thomas Edison and Pete's chilled-out responses to accompany.



A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to School
Benjamin Chaud and Davide Cali, $16.99
Chronicle Books
Excuses for being late to school reach hilarious new depths in this book. Thanks to breakfast-stealing ants, evil ninjas, a giant blob and memorable detours, actually arriving to school at all is no small feat indeed. Parents, be warned: This highly entertaining, laugh-out-loud book is likely to give kids a few new tall tales to help explain random lateness.

Swan, The Life and Dance of Anna Pavlova
Laurel Snyder, $24.99
Chronicle Books
A captivating, true-story poetic picture book that promises to inspire all budding ballerinas. When Anna's mother takes her to her first ballet concert as a young girl, a new world is revealed. This moment sets the course for a passionate journey, and Anna grows up to become one of the world's greatest prima ballerinas of all time.

Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site and Steam Train, Dream Train Board Books Boxed Set
Sherri Duskey Rinker
$20.99
Chronicle Books
Sleepy-headed infants will enjoy the pairing together of two New York Times bestsellers in this durable board book style gift set. Gentle rhyming and slumber-friendly themes will help soothe little ones to sleep.

First Snow
Peter McCarty, $16.99
HarperCollins Canada
The beauty of snow is seen through the eyes of a child as Pedro experiences the wonder of a first snowfall, first snow angel and first taste of a snowflake in this delightful children's picture book. The endearing story and adorable illustrations may warm a few adults up to the inevitable return of fluffy white stuff, too.

metro SPORTS

Liverpool qualified for the last 32 of the Europa League thanks to a Christian Benteke goal, while Celtic is knocked out by Ajax 2-1

Biyombo taking care of 'Bis' in absence of Valanciunas

NBA

Lowry, Casey laud centre's rim protection and attitude

When Jonas Valanciunas bent his big body in pain Friday night in Los Angeles while cradling his broken left hand, it could have spelled disaster for the Toronto Raptors.

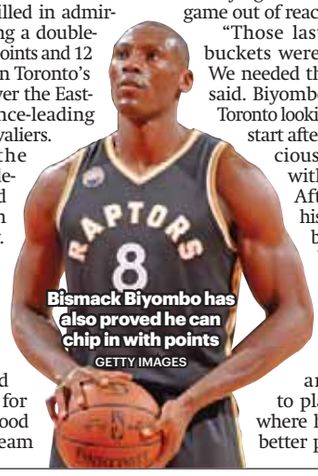
But two games into what could be a six-week absence for Toronto's starting centre, the Raptors are faring well. Bismack Biyombo is a big reason why. Biyombo started in place of the injured Valanciunas on Wednesday and filled in admirably, recording a double-double — 11 points and 12 rebounds — in Toronto's 103-99 win over the Eastern Conference-leading Cleveland Cavaliers.

"He set the tone for us defensively," said Raptors coach Dwane Casey. "Protecting the paint, talking, being physical, being a deterrent at the rim and that was big for us. That's a good team. That team right there has got so many weapons." The Raptors signed the Congolese player to a US$6-million, two-year deal in the off-season after Charlotte cut him loose, and he instantly made his presence felt as the most vocal player in training camp.

"Vocalness. Athleticism. Understanding where to be. Timing, he has great timing," Kyle Lowry said, when asked what Biyombo brings to the team.

Biyombo is known for his rim protecting — Casey has said it's "off the charts." Critics have claimed he can do little else. But the six-foot-nine centre came up big on the offensive end Wednesday when Lowry fed him for back-to-back uncontested dunks in the dying minutes to put the game out of reach.

"Those last couple of buckets were big for us. We needed them," Lowry said. Biyombo arrived in Toronto looking for a fresh start after an inauspicious four years with Charlotte. After leaving his home in Lubumbashi for Yemen at the age of 16, he was spotted at a youth tournament there and invited to play in Spain, where he spent the better part of three years. Biyombo caught the eye of Raptors coach Masai Ujiri, among other NBA general managers, at the 2011 Nike Hoop Summit — a game that pits the best American high schoolers against a team of international players.



Bismack Biyombo has also proved he can chip in with points
GETTY IMAGES

Cavaliers' LeBron James, left, is blocked at the rim by Raptors' Bismack Biyombo during second half in Toronto on Wednesday. DARREN CALABRESE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Biyombo recorded the Summit's first-ever triple-double, with 12 points, 11 boards and 10 blocks. He was drafted seventh overall by Sacramento in 2012 and then traded to Charlotte. His first two seasons were solid, but his numbers trailed off over the last two campaigns. The Raptors also acquired DeMarre Carroll in the off-season to shore up their defence. Carroll, who hounded LeBron James all night, said he and Biyombo have "similar mindsets."

> **He sets the tone for us defensively.**
> Dwayne Casey on Biyombo

"Bis just focuses on defence, he understands what got him in the league, what his strong point is and that's being defensive and grabbing rebounds," Carroll said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL IN BRIEF

Injury will keep Habs' Price out for at least a week

Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price will miss at least a week due to a nagging lower-body injury.

Carey Price
GETTY IMAGES

Price played the first 40 minutes in a 5-1 victory over the New York Rangers on Wednesday night but did not return for the third period. Head coach Michel Therrien said Thursday that Price has been put on the injured list.

On Wednesday night, the coach said the lower-body injury was the same one that kept Price — the league's No. 1 goalie — out for nine games earlier this season. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Oilers' Yakupov out for 2-4 weeks with ankle sprain

Edmonton Oilers forward Nail Yakupov is expected to miss two to four weeks after spraining his left ankle in a 4-1 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday.

He was knocked down when linesman Matt MacPherson lost his balance and fell backwards after a faceoff early in the second period. Yakupov had to be helped off the ice.

"It could've been worse based on what happened," Oilers coach Todd McLellan said Thursday. Yakupov had picked up his 100th career point earlier in the game.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Bribery encouraged when it comes to faceoffs, says Babcock

Leafs' Nazem Kadri takes a faceoff against the Predators' Mike Fisher. Kadri has a 50.12 faceoff win rate this season.
FREDERICK BREEDON/GETTY IMAGES

There's a football tradition that dictates the starting quarterback buys a big steak dinner for the offensive line the night before the game. A happy offensive line means a safe quarterback.

Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock thinks his centres should try something like that with their wingers. The centres, after all, get the individual statistical credit for won and lost faceoffs. But so often, it's the wingers that do the work in winning the draw.

"Faceoffs are very important. If I'm the centre, bribe the wingers," said Babcock. "You've got to do what you've got to do. You want to win the 50-50 pucks. You want to win the 60-40 pucks. Your wingers are a big part of that."

> **Maybe I'll have to bribe the wingers.**
> Nazem Kadri on how he aims to win more faceoffs.

The Leafs were off on Thursday and will be back on the ice Friday to practise for Saturday's game at home to Washington. When they do, they'll also practise their faceoffs, where a team effort results in credit or blame for a centre. "It's all guys on the ice, holding guys up, helping out on 50-50 pucks," said centre Nazem Kadri. "Maybe I'll have to bribe the wingers a little bit."

The Leafs have won slightly more than half of their draws — 50.5 per cent — tied with Buffalo for 12th of the 30 teams in that category. Chicago's Jonathan Toews is the gold-standard right now among centres, winning 60.66 per cent of his draws.

Tyler Bozak is the top Leaf (53.26 per cent) followed by Byron Froese (51.19), Kadri (50.12), Nick Spaling (48.97) and Peter Holland (43.75). Holland's lack of success is one of the reasons he has spent time as a healthy scratch and been sent to play wing more often than not.

"It's a little bit of everything," said Kadri. "It's a skill. It's a chess match. You've got a few different moves in your arsenal. Guys do their scouting reports. We know what guys are going to do. It's something you've got to strategize with."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Romo is roughed up as Cam rolls on

NFL

Panthers stay perfect with a demolition job in Dallas

THURSDAY in Texas

PANTHERS	COWBOYS
33	14

Cam Newton is still perfect this season. But Tony Romo might be out for good with the same injury that sidelined him for seven games.

Newton got a big boost from a defence that returned two of Romo's three interceptions for touchdowns, and the Panthers ran their NFL-best winning streak to 15 regular-season games with a 33-14 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday.

Romo injured the same left collarbone that sidelined him for all seven games of a losing streak that damaged the playoff hopes for the defending NFC East champion Cowboys (3-8).

The 35-year-old with a surgically repaired back said he would have to wait for more test results before knowing if he broke the collarbone again. He was injured in Week 2 at Philadelphia and said this injury had a similar feel. Carolina linebacker Luke Kuechly intercepted two straight passes by Romo, returning the first 32 yards for a touchdown.

Safety Kurt Coleman picked off Romo's second pass of the game and took it back 36 yards for the score to help the Panthers become the 16th NFL team to start a season 11-0.

Newton did his part as well, getting Carolina's only offensive touchdown on a four-yard run for a 30-6 lead moments before Romo's injury. He had 183 yards passing with several key third-down conversions and another 45 yards rushing.

On the second play of Dallas' possession after Newton's score, Romo was hit by a blitzing Thomas Davis and went down on his left shoulder.

Romo went on injured reserve with a designation to return after the first injury, and the Cowboys couldn't win without him. Coach Jason Garrett wouldn't rule out Romo returning this season, and said he would play if he was cleared even with the Cowboys (3-8) unlikely to have a realistic shot to defend their NFC East title.

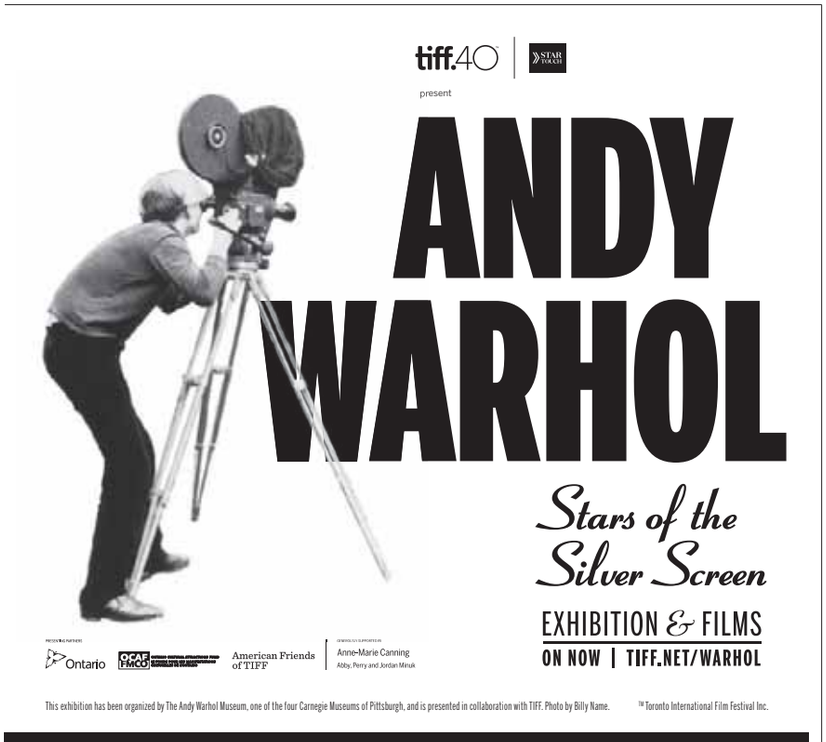
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LIONS FEAST

Matthew Stafford and Calvin Johnson combined for one of the best games of their careers, helping the surging Detroit Lions keep the Philadelphia Eagles reeling. Stafford tied a career high with five touchdown passes. Three were to Johnson in a 45-14 win.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas quarterback Tony Romo is helped off the field by team staff after suffering another injury in the second half of the defeat to the Panthers Thursday. BRANDON WADE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



PAN AM GAMES DOPING

Three Canadian medals upgraded

Canadian swimmer Zack Chetrat will have his Pan Am medal upgraded to silver while teammate Alec Page and distance runner Rachel Hannah will receive bronze medals after a pair of Peruvian athletes were disqualified due to doping infractions.

The Canadian Olympic Committee was informed of the redistribution of medals by the Pan American Sports Organization after the conclusion of the anti-doping process, the COC said Thursday in a release.

Hannah gets the third-place result in the women's marathon. Chetrat moves into second place in the men's 200-metre butterfly while Page takes third in the same event.

"The experience of a home Games will be a memory I never forget," Page said in a statement. "It's great to be recognized and receive an honour like this, but the true honour was representing my team and my country at a home Games."

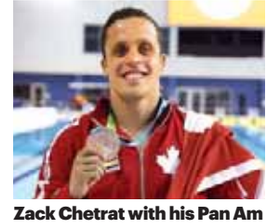
Gladys Tejeda originally won marathon gold in two hours 33.03 seconds. She was stripped of the result due to a failed doping test during the Games, Athletics Canada said.

Adrianna Da Silva of Brazil (2:35.40) will be upgraded to gold and American Lindsay Flanagan (2:36.30) will move up to silver. Hannah (2:41.06) will receive her bronze medal on Saturday in Kingston, Ont., during a ceremony at the Canadian cross-country championships.

Swimmer Mauricio Fiol was also disqualified, a Swimming Canada spokesman said. He tested positive for the banned steroid stanozolol. Fiol finished just 0.14 seconds behind gold medallist Leonardo De Deus of Brazil. Chetrat moves into second and Page takes third.

Page will receive his medal Friday at the Saanich Commonwealth Place pool in Victoria. Plans for Chetrat's ceremony have not yet been finalized.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Zack Chetrat with his Pan Am bronze medal for the men's 200M butterfly. It will now be upgraded to silver. STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

IN BRIEF

Five more Russians hit with lengthy doping bans

Two Russian weightlifters, two professional cyclists and a sport dancer have been banned for doping, the country's anti-doping agency said Thursday.

Both cyclists race for Itera-Katusha, which was briefly denied a license in 2012 over repeated doping violations. The cyclists are Ivan Lutsenko and Andrei Lukonin.

The weightlifters include Russian junior silver medallist Azamat Dzhioev, who received a four-year ban. Also suspended is Sergei Zhuromsky, who received a four-year ban, and sport dancer Andrei Gusev, banned for a year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brazil soccer chief loses seat on FIFA committee

The Brazilian Football Confederation says its president Marco Polo del Nero has stepped down from FIFA's executive committee and will be replaced by Fernando Sarney. Del Nero was not indicted in the FIFA scandal that began snaring top football officials six months ago. But he could be arrested if he travels outside Brazil.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Reilly's intelligence earns praise

103RD GREY CUP

Edmonton QB blends smarts with hard-nose mentality

Mike Reilly focused as much on his grades as he did on football while growing up.

The Edmonton Eskimos quarterback graduated from Central Washington University with a 3.6 grade-point average and a mechanical engineering degree.

"I just always really liked math and numbers and puzzles and things like that and trying to figure things out," Reilly said Thursday. "My favourite course in college, honestly, was probably physics. And it was calculus for a while until I got into 300-level calculus and then I was like, 'Ah, this stuff is crazy. I don't like this anymore.'"

He even used his degree between being released by the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers in September 2009 and being signed by the Green Bay Packers two months later.

"I worked designing H-VAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) and plumbing systems for a processing plant," Reilly said of the job near his hometown of Kennewick, Wash. "It was an experience. I like football a lot better, for sure. That's why they tell you to get your degree, so that when you fall on hard times you've got something to fall back on."

89.8

Reilly played just 10 games this regular season due to torn ligaments in his left knee. He still managed to complete 65 per cent of his passes and posted a 89.8 passer rating — both are highs for him as an Eskimo.

Reilly, 30, has held down a job he loves since signing with the B.C. Lions in 2010 before being traded to Edmonton in 2013.

As his Eskimos prepare to take on the Ottawa Redblacks in Sunday's Grey Cup, coaches and teammates praise Reilly for his brains, leadership and toughness.

Eskimos quarterback Mike Reilly puts on a cape from interviewer Cabbie Richards during a media availability on Thursday. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

"Just putting things together, understanding how it works, he's very cerebral," Edmonton offensive co-ordinator Stephen McAdoo said.

"He probably doesn't get enough credit for his mind and how he handles things out on the field."

McAdoo, a former offensive lineman who's been around a lot of quarterbacks, put Reilly up there with Toronto's Ricky Ray and former Montreal pivot Anthony Calvillo.

"Probably the biggest thing that I get from Mike, and you can probably ask anybody around this league that knows him or has played against him, is he's one of the toughest competitors around," he said.

"He's very tough. I love him for that, but I try to get him to understand I don't need him to be tough all the time," he added. "There's smart times to be tough. Don't take unnecessary hits." THE CANADIAN PRESS

PREDICTION

Eskimos' track record gives them the edge

Edmonton Eskimos head coach Chris Jones knows all too well how good Ottawa Redblacks veteran quarterback Henry Burris can be in a Grey Cup game.

Jones was the Calgary Stampeders' defensive co-ordinator in 2008 when they won the Grey Cup with a 22-14 victory over the Montreal Alouettes at Olympic Stadium.

Jones, however, has had the upper hand this season with the Eskimos winning both of their games against the Redblacks.

Edmonton has shown it can play defence against Ottawa and has the talent in the secondary to handle the East squad's four 1,000-yard receivers. The Eskimos do boast two 1,000-yard receivers but it's Reilly who makes that offence go.

And the combination of Jones, Reilly and nine straight wins make it hard to go against the West Division champions.

Pick — Edmonton.

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RECIPE Sweet Potato Shepherd's Pie

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

We've updated this classic comfort food dish with a healthy topping of mashed sweet potatoes.

Ready in
Prep time: 60 minutes
Serves 8

Ingredients
- 2 lb organic lean ground beef
- 2 large cloves garlic, diced
- 3 sticks celery, diced
- 2 yellow onions, diced
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 Tbsps chili powder
- 2 tsps ground cumin
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 2 Tbsps flour
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 1/4 cup water
- 6 drops of Worcestershire sauce
- 2 large sweet potatoes, cut into even-sized wedges
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3 Tbsps butter

Directions
1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. In a large Dutch oven, cook beef over medium heat until browned, about 10 minutes.
3. Stir in garlic, celery, onions, carrots, pepper, chili powder, cumin, cinnamon, oregano and 1 tsp of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.
4. Stir in flour; cook for 1 minute. Add broth, water and Worcestershire sauce; simmer for 3 minutes. Divide mixture between two 8-inch baking dishes.
5. Meanwhile, in large pot of boiling salted water, cook sweet potato until tender, about 12 minutes. Drain and return pot to low heat. Stir in milk, butter and remaining salt; mash until smooth. Spread evenly over beef.
6. Bake until bubbly at the edges, about 35 minutes. Or cover with plastic wrap and then foil and freeze for up to 1 month. Bake, uncovered and frozen, in 350 F oven for 50 to 60 minutes.

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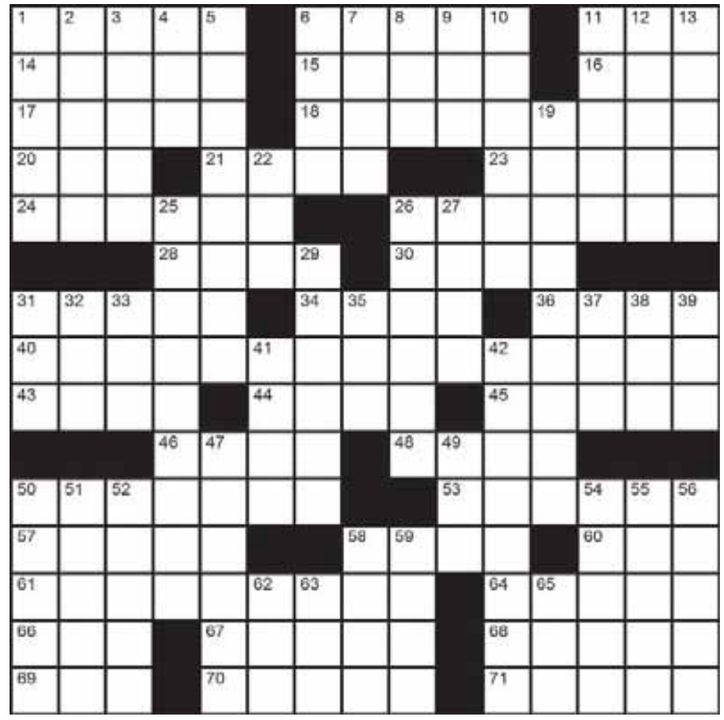
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Fastened: 2 wds.
6. Morning times: acronym + abbr.
11. Ms. Monroe, mini-ly
14. _-_-porter
15. Tamarack _ (NWT's official tree)
16. 'Brit' suffix
17. Classic fabric
18. Territory just outside Montreal where the Mohawk ironworkers who worked on #50-Across (as well as other buildings and bridges in North America for more than a century) are from
20. Veggie of Japan
21. Mr. Sachedina (Correspondent, CTV National News)
23. B-movie prop, _ ray gun
24. Melancholy in mood
26. Food storage items
28. 'Euclid' and 'Jacob' suffixes
30. Ms. Poehler's
31. Render revolverless
34. Seep slowly
36. Colosseum outfit
40. Dsquared2 is the fashion brand of these identical Canadian twin brothers: 4 wds.
43. Spectacles holders
44. Egypt-themed opera
45. Many times
46. Pirouette-maker's garb
48. Shingles site
50. _ Tower aka One World Trade Center (New York's tallest skyscraper)
53. Greatly grasp
57. Swift
58. Lingerie pieces
60. 1985 chart-topper: "We _ the World"
61. Travel plan
64. Happen
66. Jiffy
67. Rapscallion
68. Got along
69. ms. lang, et al.
70. Mary, Queen of _
71. Guitar bars

DOWN
1. Grade below C Minus: letter + wd.
2. 'Rainbow'-meaning prefix
3. Religion branch [abbr.]
4. Sport-_ (All-purpose vehicle)
5. Vista
6. _-Seltzer
7. Volcanic crater
8. Royal's title letters
9. Mil. force since 1910
10. "Only Love" feat. Pitbull & Gene Noble is a current song by what Grammy-winning reggae star?
11. Florida city
12. Billy Joel's "Don't _ _ Why"
13. Ostrich-like birds
19. Johanna _, CBC News Now meteorologist
22. Gents
25. Dr. Stanley K. _ (Canadian weight loss physician)
26. Grand _ (Istanbul marketplace)
27. Preacher's closer
29. Dietary concern
31. 'Quiet' add-on
32. PBS funding org.
33. Swiss river, variantly
35. Unpaired
37. Slugger Mel
38. "Sheesh!"
39. The way Miss Shirley doesn't spell her name
41. 1949-created intl. alliance
42. Becomes less hot: 2 wds.
47. Farm milk dispensers
49. Goose, in Italy
50. Search, security-style
51. Ranked
52. The Odyssey, and others
54. Mother-of-pearl
55. Oil holder in the kitchen
56. Does a Border Collie's work
58. _ After Shave
59. Deli breads
62. Legendary bird
63. Past
65. Elevator _

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
If someone places an obstacle in your path your reaction will be to smash it to pieces. Such an extreme reaction could have unforeseen consequences, so find a compromise.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
If you let your suspicions get the best of you you might miss out on something fun. Not everyone is out to get you or grow rich at your expense. Don't be so defensive.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
It does not matter what feuds you've had in the past, it only matters now that you work together on something that you both believe in. You can do a lot of good if you join forces with like-minded people.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You can't force people to change their ways. You may try to persuade them, but they must be free to make their own mistakes. We learn most from the things we get wrong.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Cosmic activity in the communications area of your chart means you have plenty to say for yourself. Make sure that your words are positive and progressive because a lot of people will take what you say seriously.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You will have to make some unpopular decisions. Don't waste time worrying about what other people might think, just do what needs to be done.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Mars in your sign gives you the courage to take risks but they are more likely to pay off if you allow yourself to be guided by what your inner voice is trying to tell you.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
If you do not feel comfortable then get up and leave. You must not put your own needs on hold just to make others feel good. On the contrary, your first duty is always to yourself.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You'll find it easy to get support today, let others know that what you do for yourself you'll also do for them. It may not be entirely true but if you succeed they will certainly get a share of the spoils.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You've lost your direction lately but today your aim is crystal clear: you know exactly what you are doing and why you are doing it. Make sure you don't lose sight of your target again.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You need to bring problems and worries into the open where they can be discussed and dealt with. Don't go looking to blame others and you will find it easy to reach a compromise.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
A chapter in your life has been finished and it is time to move on. There may be one or two tears but that is natural and nothing to be ashamed of. What comes next will be much more enjoyable.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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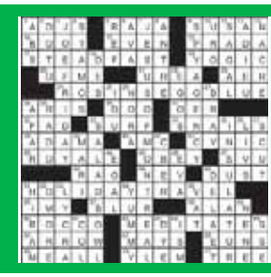

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3	5	1	4	7	9	6	8	2
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4	2	6	3	5	8	9	7	1

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